DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 448 323 CE 081 096

AUTHOR Rooth, Edna
TITLE An Investigation of the Enhanced Relationship between Participants in Lifeskills Courses and the Environment. Human Needs, Resources and the Environment Publication Series.
INSTITUTION Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria (South Africa).
SPONS AGENCY Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Pretoria (South Africa).
ISBN ISBN-0-7969-1947-X
PUB DATE 2000-00-00
NOTE 109p.; Series editors are Johann Lodewyk Marais and Martjie Bosman. This publication series is a selection of research reports that have emerged from the Human Needs, Resources, and the Environment (HNRE) Programme to date.
AVAILABLE FROM Human Sciences Research Council Publishers, Private Bag X41, Pretoria 0001, South Africa.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome; Action Research; Adult Basic Education; *Community Development; Conflict Resolution; Coping; *Daily Living Skills; Empowerment; Experiential Learning; Foreign Countries; Health Promotion; Leadership; Material Development; Outcomes of Education; Program Effectiveness; Program Implementation; Self Actualization; Self Concept; Team Training
IDENTIFIERS *South Africa

ABSTRACT

The Lifeskills Project in South Africa provides services to communities in lifeskills facilitation training. Empowerment and capacity building in course and workshop participants is an underlying theme, with emphasis on self-concept enhancement for community enhancement. Aims of the Lifeskills Project include: (1) training facilitators in experiential learning techniques with lifeskills as content matter; (2) running lifeskills workshops on requested psycho-social lifeskills topics; (3) materials development; (4) provision of networking facilities; (5) consultation services on workshop implementation and design; and (6) conducting action research. The Lifeskills Project includes courses such as AIDS prevention, assertiveness, communication, conflict management, coping with change, leadership, health management, and team building. The project was evaluated through action research. Participant reflections were documented during workshops, and written evaluations were obtained after each workshop session, at course end, and in follow-up meetings. In addition, facilitator reflections were recorded. The research concluded that there are advantages of intervention grounded in experiential learning, and that participants in lifeskills courses developed enhanced self-perceptions and were more empowered. They were more likely to interact proactively with the environment as a result of attending a lifeskills course, and they exhibited less stress. The project also resulted in the design of a user-friendly workbook for future courses. (Contains 254 references.) (KC)

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by Edna Rooth

Series Editors
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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE ENHANCED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS IN LIFESKILLS COURSES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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Edna Rooth

Series editors

Johann Lodewyk Marais
Martjie Bosman

Human Sciences Research Council
Pretoria
2000

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Human needs, resources and the environment publication series
Series editors: Johan Lodewyk Marais and Martjie Bosman

ISBN 0-7969-1947-X

HSRC Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
Rooth, Edna
An investigation of the enhanced relationship between participants in lifeskills courses and the environment / Ed na Rooth ; series editors Johann Lodewyk Marias, Martjie Bosman. – Pretoria: HSRC Publishers, 2000.
p. cm. (Human needs, resources and the environment publication series)
"This publication series ... is a selection of research reports that have emerged from the HNRE Programme to date".
Bibliography: p
ISBN 0-7969-1947-X
1. Life skills – Study and teaching (Continuing education). I. Marais, Johann Lodewyk. II. Bosman, Martjie. III. Human Needs, Resources and the Environment Programme. IV. Title. V. Series
2000
158.107–dc21

Layout and design: Susan Smith
Cover design: Jam Street Studio

Published by:
HSRC Publishers
Private Bag X 41
Pretoria 0001

Printed by:
Quality Duplicating
(012) 567 4604

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

The Human Needs, Resources and the Environment (HNRE) Programme was initiated in 1980 by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism to fund outside researchers who do research on environmental issues in South Africa. In 1985 the management of the funding process was contracted out to the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), where it has since been co-ordinated as a national co-operative programme.

The HNRE Programme is the only comprehensive environmental research programme in South Africa that gives a central position to the human and social sciences. The programme also promotes an integrated approach to environmental issues.

Under the management of the HSRC, the HNRE Programme has funded 70 projects. Apart from the invaluable body of knowledge generated by these projects, an impressive network of researchers from a wide array of disciplines and a large number of institutions has been formed.

This publication series, which is mainly funded by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, is a selection of research reports that have emerged from the HNRE Programme to date. The series aims to disseminate a number of the research findings to the broad research community and the general public in order to increase awareness of environmental concerns in South Africa and to encourage responsible environmental behaviour at all levels.

The HSRC project team is responsible for the selection of the reports, the editing and the text processing, while HSRC Publishers is responsible for the production of the reports.

Johann Lodewyk Marais
Martjie Bosman

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

1.1 THE LIFESKILLS PROJECT

1.1.1 Aims

The Lifeskills Project is housed at UCT, which is the organisation responsible for the research, referred to as the research project in this study. The Lifeskills Project aims to provide a service to communities in lifeskills facilitation training. Empowerment and capacity building in course and workshop participants is an underlying theme, with emphasis placed on self-concept enhancement for community enhancement.

Participants in courses are encouraged to run similar courses at their NGOs and institutions. The vital network of continuous learning and teaching that takes place in the community is thus cognized (Werner & Bower, 1981).

Specific aims of the Lifeskills Project include:

- Training facilitators in experiential learning techniques with lifeskills as content matter
- Running lifeskills workshops on requested psycho-social lifeskills topics
- Materials development
- Provision of networking facilities
- Consultation services on workshop implementation and design
- Conducting action research

1.1.2 Methods of the lifeskills project

The methods of the Lifeskills Project are congruent with its underlying aims of empowerment and capacity building. Accordingly methods best suited to the above aims are used and developed (Rooth, 1995, 1997a)

Emancipatory education is at the core of the design and implementation of lifeskills courses. Courses are facilitated, rooted in an ontological perspective of experiential learning and contextualised in-group interactive processes.

Experiential learning is the learning theory and philosophy at the core of all courses. Experiential learning is a process of learning from direct experience and reflecting on what has been learnt.

Groupwork as a participatory intervention, using democratic practices and promoting empowerment in the context of community development, is intrinsic to all courses.

Facilitation is the method used to promote the group process in a participatory, democratic and inclusive way, and allows construction of new knowledge based on existing competencies.

Use is made of techniques such as music and movement, art, play, story telling, games and roleplay to encourage optimal participation and to be inclusive of many learning styles. Whole-brain learning is encouraged and attention is paid to the affective domain. An atmosphere conducive to learning is promoted.

Courses are presented in a user-friendly manner and the social sciences are dejargonised to make information accessible and comprehensible.

Attempts are made to involve participants actively from the onset of planning the intervention to its completion. This means that prospective course participants will participate in topic choices.

1.1.3 Lifeskills project courses

The lifeskills courses and workshops incorporate the main psychosocial lifeskills most often requested by participants.

A selection of the following, depending on participant needs, would form the core of a typical lifeskills course:

- Aids prevention
- Assertiveness
- Communication
- Conflict management
- Coping with change and transformation
- Countering racism and prejudice
- Countering sexism
- Creative problem solving
- Developing empathy and understanding
- Environmental exploration
- Goal setting
- Health management and maintenance
- Leadership
- Motivation
- Self-concept enhancement
- Stress management
- Team building
- Time management

1.1.4 Participants in lifeskills project courses

The participants in lifeskills courses are from a wide range of geographical areas, occupations, cultures and age groups. The majority of participants are teachers, social

workers, community workers, health workers and prospective facilitators. Participants are mainly from previously disadvantaged areas.

See Chapter 2 for further information on methods and content of lifeskills courses, and Chapter 5 for details of sample participant demographics.

1.2 REASONS FOR UNDERTAKING THE RESEARCH PROJECT

A process of action research, the needs expressed by participants and the RDP, as well as the link between lifeskills and the environment, contributed to the inception of this research project.

1.2.1 Action research

Action research (Walker, 1989; Winter, 1989; Reason, 1994) was an integral part of the implementation of lifeskills courses initiated by the Lifeskills Project. During and after each course, a process of reflection, analysis and evaluation was instituted.

During workshops participant reflections were encouraged and documented. This gave insight into the meaning and experience of the workshop activity, participant learning and significance attributed to the activity, as well as participants' understanding of the particular lifeskill.

After each workshop session, written evaluations were obtained.

At the conclusion of a course, which would comprise a number of workshop sessions, a thorough evaluation was conducted, with a further evaluation approximately a month after the course. These evaluations were analysed and reflected on to continue to add, to refine and to improve courses.

Extensive facilitator reflections were also recorded.

In addition, Gordons' (1968) Twenty-Statement Test was administered as a pre- and post-intervention measure. These results were analysed in conjunction with written evaluations.

Finally, participants had to provide feedback at follow-up meetings on how they were using the courses in their work and communities. This information was recorded and used as further course assessment.

This ongoing action research led to course material development and refinement.

As an outcome of the ongoing action research, the following factors emerged:

- Preliminary evaluations done by the Lifeskills Project indicated an enhanced sense of skills, enhanced self-concept configuration, improved motivation and increased feelings of empowerment, as expressed by most participants.
- Evaluations conducted by organisations that sent their staff on courses indicated similar positive results. This corresponds with the findings of Larson (1984) on the beneficial results and effects of lifeskills training. A pilot study conducted by Bloomberg (1993) on 40 participants who attended courses ran by the Lifeskills Project showed a significant positive difference in self-concept enhancement at the

90 % confidence level, using Rosenbergs' (1965) 10-item self-concept scale, Gordons' (1968) Twenty Statement Test and Robsons' (1989) 30-item self-concept questionnaire.

- Of particular note was the number of participants who indicated after the courses that they experienced a changed perception of their environments, in general terms. There appeared to be a shift of focus towards a more *positive attitude towards* the environment. They appeared to be more *in charge* of their immediate environments, and increasingly willing to make *changes* where necessary.
- Part of the intent of the lifeskills courses was to encourage participants to devise action plans for solving some of their problems, with an emphasis on focus and practical immediacy. This would often entail direct interaction with their environments. The sustainability and success of this aspect require further research, as do the possible implications it could hold for environmental interactions.
- The tacit implications of the preliminary evaluations and observations had to be substantiated by methodical investigation. Manifold questions arose, and concomitant to analyses of course methodology, the cardinal importance of initiating a research programme was indicated.
- It appeared from an analysis of lifeskills course evaluations that research held the potential for contributing towards needs provisions (Lifeskills Project, 1994).

1.2.2 Providing for needs

The research project could provide useful and relevant research material. Organisations, institutions and NGOs have expressed an urgent need for comprehensive research on lifeskills in a South African context. Research on lifeskills facilitation in South Africa is not extensive and has not been conducted exhaustively in this particular field.

Positive self-concept formation, capacity building and empowerment are quintessential concepts in South Africa as a result of its history of apartheid, and concomitant human abuses and repression. Concerted efforts need to be made to counter the psychosocial damage done by the previous regime. One way to do this is to research empowerment strategies. If lifeskills courses add to empowerment strategies, they have to be researched as part of a needs provision function. Studies by Lambley (1980) and Thomas (1987:32) point to the negative experiences of apartheid on the psyche of South Africans. Supportive of these findings is Turton (1987:121), who found that apartheid caused damage to ego identity and to self-esteem. In addition, studies researched by Neighbors and Jackson (1996) indicate the negative effect racism has on mental health. This corresponds with the findings of Randall (1972), Sniderman and Piazza (1993) and Solomos and Back (1996) on the negative effects of racism and apartheid.

The RDP (ANC, 1994) called for empowerment and capacity building to receive urgent attention. Given the preliminary indications that participants in lifeskills courses may experience a sense of empowerment and that capacity building may have

occurred, the need to further research and investigate this possibility became a priority.

According to Schreiner (1995:5) the RDP will not happen unless we look after our environment. The relationship between humans, lifeskills acquisition and the environment has to be addressed to view potential empowerment strategies comprehensively.

1.2.3 Human-environment relationships in a lifeskills context

If we are going to find rational and comprehensive solutions to the grave problems facing the environment, an investigation into one dimension, such as the role of lifeskills, of this multifaceted problem is advantageous. The possibility of human-environment interactions and relations being improved by the cross-fertilisation between lifeskills and environmental interactions has to be investigated.

The close interrelationship between humans and the environment, and the implications thereof, have to be considered when developing strategies to protect and sustain the environment. The importance of being aware that "we are organic outgrowths of our physical and social environments, not detached and independent entities" (Leff, 1978:284) is fundamental to this research project.

For the purpose of this research project, the environment is viewed in general terms. The environment indicates everything surrounding us, including the natural environment, which will be referred to specifically. The rationale for this is to highlight specific aspects of the natural environment during the course of research, and where necessary, to differentiate between the environment and the natural environment.

The reciprocal relationship between humans and the environment is well researched. Kowalski (1993:17) promotes the idea that thought processes of individuals are reflections of the result of their interactions with their environments, and emphasises that each activity changes the environment as well as the person carrying out the activity. Maguire (1996:185) sees environment as a "highly socially mediated category" and feels that "our perceptions and misperceptions of it are crucially shaped and distorted by the character of our social processes and identities". For Heller and Monahan (1977) human behaviour is determined as much by the environment in which they are placed, as by their personal characteristics. Leff (1978:13) uses the term "ecological consciousness" to denote a way of thinking and feeling that is characterised by a sense of self as part of a larger holistic system. Leff (1978:284) indicates that experience, cognition and overt behaviour stem from and can only be comprehended in relation to the environment. The manifestation of this reciprocal relationship may lead to the cross-fertilisation between the natural and social sciences.

There is a need for the promotion of close co-operation between the human and natural sciences. Bandura (1995:2) recognises that the "vastly enhanced human power to transform the environment can have pervasive effects not only on current life, but on how future generations live out their lives. Our technical capability to render

uninhabitable much of the planet on which we reside attests to the growing magnitude of human power". Redclift and Benton (1994:1) detail the commitment to explore the ways in which patterns of social relationships, cultural forms, political practices and economic institutions are all implicated in the production of environmental change. Lash, Szerszynski and Wynne (1996:2) indicate the importance of the increasing role of social science in environmental policy knowledge generation.

Leff (1978:285) asks for "an understanding of ecological processes and a continuing awareness of how these processes operate in ones' own life and surroundings". To separate lifeskills interventions from environmental contextuality is to do a disservice to both people and the environment. Humans are not separate and independent from the environment. Axelrod and Lehman (1993:149) noted the monumental impact of the collective effect of individuals on the natural environment, and see the need for investigations into the psychological antecedents of individuals' reactions to environmental concerns, in the quest for a better comprehension of the factors guiding individual choice regarding environmentally responsible behaviour. This research project, by being eclectic, aims to advance this bridge building exercise.

The reciprocal relationship between humans and the environment is of significance in understanding both the psychosocial and natural sciences. The studies of Melamed (1995) indicate that dysfunctional environments may have an adverse effect on mental health. Taylor and Repetti (1997) emphasise that a healthy environment provides safety and opportunities for social integration, in addition to the ability to predict and control aspects of that environment. Kaplan and Kaplan (1982:114) state that an environment that is "involving and that makes sense will foster the achievement of clarity, just as the absence of these two factors will incline the balance towards confusion and chaos". The Lifeskills Project is particularly concerned with clarity, locus of control and participants' feelings of being in charge of their environments.

1.2.4 The environment and locus of control

Locus of control affects how a person will respond to a specific situation. A high internal locus of control causes people to adopt proactive coping strategies. The work of Rotter (1966), Lefcourt (1981) and Bandura (1995) regarding locus of control is of particular relevance to this research project. Bandura (1995) indicates that self-efficacy, which is marked by internality of locus of control, is related to positive self-concept, high self-esteem, greater social influence, greater reliance on self-reinforcement, being less anxious, having fewer psychosomatic symptoms and coping better with stress. Bandura (1995:12) views an affirmative sense of efficacy as contributing to psychological well-being and performance accomplishments.

The Lifeskills Project is intrinsically concerned with encouraging internality of locus of control, efficacy and proactivity for greater community and environment benefit. Efficacy is cardinal to environmental interactions. A sense of self-efficacy has been found to differentiate between those who are environmentally active and those who are not (Hines, Hungerford & Tomera, 1986; Sia, Hungerford & Tomera, 1985; Manzo & Weinstein, 1987). Research conducted by Wollman and Strouder (1991) supports

the notion that the stronger the sense of efficacy, the more involved people will become in bringing about change.

An exercise set by the Lifeskills Project during courses required participants to indicate their greatest fears. Of note was the high incidence of participants who feared events in the environment, which they perceived as *beyond their control*. A sense of helplessness appeared to pervade many participants. Participants seemed to feel overwhelmed by societys' impact on the natural environment. Their sense of locus of control appeared external as they felt that the problems the environment faced were too big for them to solve.

The studies of Coopersmith (1967) indicating that people with high self-esteem are more effective in meeting environmental demands than persons with low self-esteem, as well as efficacy studies conducted more recently (Axelrod & Lehman, 1993) have pertinent implications for the importance of locus of control and positive self-concept accretion as reciprocally interrelated to the environment. Bandura (1995:38) comments that "the psychological barriers created by beliefs of collective powerlessness are more demoralising and debilitating than are external impediments. People who have a sense of collective efficacy will mobilise their efforts and resources to cope with external obstacles to the changes they seek. But those convinced of their collective powerlessness will cease trying even though changes are attainable through perseverant collective effort". Lifeskills acquisition and environmental proactivity appear to be closely linked.

Locus of control, self-efficacy and self-concept are constructs that cannot be removed from the environment in which they are constituted. Lifeskills accretion is closely connected to environmental situatedness. Nelson-Jones (1992:41) indicates that "lifeskills weaknesses are usually maintained both by what people do to themselves and by what the environment keeps doing to them". This dimension of environment and self-construct interrelatedness has to be studied as part of comprehensive lifeskills research.

Jordan (1996:4) warns that "globalisation holds out the threat that local people will exercise less control over resources and their environments than ever before". This lack of control can have serious repercussions for both the environment and individuals' senses of autonomy. Autonomy is best described by Benard (1995:67) as having to do with a sense of ones' own identity, in that it "involves an ability to act independently and to exert some control over ones' environment, and includes a sense of task mastery, internal locus of control, self-agency, and self-efficacy". Lifeskills acquisition is inherently concerned with autonomy as a function of self-empowerment.

For Bandura (1995:34) "group achievements and social change are rooted in self-efficacy". The implications that this holds for environmental concerns are important, as a progression towards an increasingly nurturing relationship with the environment is called for. Hall, Hall and Abacis' (1997:494) research indicates that an experiential human relations' course can provide participants with a stronger sense of control over their own lives. Generally, characteristics of locus of control are relatively enduring, but strategic interventions can change an individuals' score (Layton, 1985). The potential of combining self-empowerment – inducing interventions with environ-

mental education holds implications for progressive environmental education structures.

For a further discussion on locus of control, lifeskills and the environment, see Chapter 3.

1.2.5 Lifeskills and environmental education

The Lifeskills Project views lifeskills acquisition in a holistic mode as a participatory and action-oriented process contextualised in an environmental perspective. Humans are part of their environments and the environment is inextricably linked to human interaction.

The notion of infusing aspects of the natural environment in general lifeskills training is increasingly gaining acceptance. The willingness of environmental concerns to integrate and infuse with other subjects is illustrated by the promotion of environmental education as a cross-curricular matter (Semmelink, 1997). In order to be of specific use to environmentally oriented organisations, further research into possible infusions of lifeskills and environmental constructs is required. Madihlaba (1996:19) indicates that in Cuba, environmental education is progressive in the sense that learning lifeskills in the field is seen to integrate students with their environment, thus encouraging them to develop a passion for their environment and feel that they are part of the natural environment.

The need for environmental education to permeate modes of teaching and learning is expressed by Filho (1997:118) who points out that "[p]rogress needs to be made in relation to a wider awareness of the various advantages connected with the introduction of environmental components within the framework of adult education initiatives". For N'Gaba-Waye (1997:123) "adults themselves need to increase their skills and abilities in environmental affairs in order to make a greater contribution through lifelong education to the establishment of a genuine dialogue between themselves and the Earth".

Research has highlighted the need for environmental education to do more than inform people. The findings of Grob (1995) that the strongest effect on environmental behaviour stemmed from personal-philosophical values and emotions, whereas the effects on environmental behaviour stemming from factual knowledge were minimal, hold vast implications for lifeskills and environmental education interventions. This is corroborated by the Commission on Environmental Education (1996:36) which does not see environmental education as being about the transferring of information. The possibility that people will be proactive towards wholesome environmental living is increased when they have an affective response to the environment. The opportunity to develop or reawaken such an affective response may be implicitly contained in lifeskills courses.

The research findings of Glasser (1974:317) indicate the need for environmental awareness and problem-solving skills to be an integral part of education. Skills needed for environmental sustainability correspond in many cases to general lifeskills. With enhanced lifeskills acquisition, communities may be enabled to become effectively

involved in sustainable development of the environment both at local and global levels of decision making.

The Commission on Environmental Educations' (1996:36) recommendations that the environment be seen as socially constructed, and that environmental education is an active process aimed at empowering learners to find solutions as well as participate in environmental governance, is an underlying tenet of this research project. The promotion of informed participation in environmental governance is a key aspect of lifeskills interventions as part of empowerment enhancement.

However, from needs analyses and problems shared by participants in lifeskills courses run by the Lifeskills Project, a number of disturbing factors emerged. It became apparent that there was an expressed alienation from the natural environment, worry about the state of the environment, fear of and for the natural environment and perceived helplessness and a lack of exposure to action strategies. In addition, in some instances a lack of accessible information concerning the environment, combined with the lack of participative interventions, was evident.

Activities in some of the Lifeskills Project courses included asking participants to illustrate how they would see the environment in 30 years' time. Impressions concerning the natural environment were largely negative, in juxtaposition to an increasingly positive and optimistic outlook from 1994 regarding political and socio-economic factors. Participants generally viewed the future of the natural environment as being bleak, with very few resources left. A common statement was: "My children or grandchildren will never see the plants and animals that I have seen. There will be little left that is green".

The perception that the natural environment was a valuable resource was predominant among course participants. Ideas regarding the use of the natural environment in lifeskills courses were taking form. The natural environment is particularly rich in the characteristics necessary for restorative experiences (Ulrich, Simons, Losito, Fiorito, Miles & Zelson, 1991; Herzog & Bosley, 1992; Kaplan, 1995). Part of the aim of lifeskills interventions is to energise, motivate and generally heal participants. Due to the logistics, and at times prevailing impracticability of getting groups into the natural environment, the idea of bringing the natural environment to groups, wherever they are, had to be investigated. Accordingly the infusion of environmental constructs was seen as a possibility.

An increasing number of participants from environmental groups requested training as lifeskills facilitators. It appeared that environmental organisations were progressively including lifeskills in their approaches and orientations. In their application forms, the responses to the question: *Why do you want to do the lifeskills course?* indicated the need for facilitation skills as well as information on lifeskills, as they were required to run workshops on other topics besides environmental issues. These environmentalists wished to complement environmental skills with lifeskills.

This research project has a specific psychosocial perspective that can make a contribution to improved interactions with the environment.

CHAPTER 2

BROAD BACKGROUND

This chapter provides a background to this study. Information on lifeskills courses (the intervention), the course content, course methods, the participants in the study as well as a delimitation of the study and general aims are discussed.

2.1 LIFESKILLS COURSES (THE INTERVENTION)

Lifeskills refer to the skills necessary for successful living and learning that enable people to participate fully in community development and holistic environmental living.

Lifeskills education focuses on converting psychological principles and knowledge into teachable skills to meet the demands for effective responses to the challenges of life. The underlying principle of "giving psychology away" (Miller, 1969) is fundamental to this approach. See section 3.4 for further conceptual considerations.

The lifeskills courses were presented as either five days of intensive training, consisting of approximately 45 hours, with a five-hour follow-up in a months' time, or a twelve-week alternative consisting of three to five hours a week, also with a follow-up a month after the last date.

2.2 COURSE CONTENT

Course content focused on the topics requested by participants and was based on the content of Rooth (1995). The course content varied according to the experiences and learning that the groups brought with them, as the existing knowledge of participants was used as a starting point. The courses comprised a combination of seven psychosocial lifeskills.

2.2.1 Self-concept enhancement

This entailed looking at self-images and body-images, positive qualities, sharing aspects of the self, practical strategies for self-affirmation, learning to give and receive positive feedback, becoming aware of self-talk, self-belief and encouraging positive self-concept formation. The emphasis was on positive self-concept enhancement and practical strategies to develop positive self-configurations were practised. In addition, self-concept enhancement was a core concept that was an underlying theme throughout the courses. See section 3.5.1 for a discussion on self-concept.

2.2.2 Conflict management

Conflict management skills included assertiveness skills, mediation and negotiation skills, the use of I-sentences, viewing the antecedents of conflict and practising strategies to deal with conflict. Conflict was dealt with at a personal level, and broader extrapolations were made to general conflict resolution skills. The role of power and lack of power was discussed.

2.2.3 Creative problem solving

This component dealt with alternative ways of looking at problems, whole-brain thinking, unlocking creativity in participants, becoming aware of self-criticisms as blocks to creativity, and activities to encourage creativity. Participants were given the opportunity to explore their innate creativity in a variety of ways and attention was paid to the *process* involved, and not the end products of creativity. The focus was on discovering creativity, encouraging lateral thinking and exploring methods to enhance creativity.

2.2.4 Communication

Communication involved a focus on listening skills, developing understanding and empathy, repeating and reflecting, looking at body language, and opportunities to practice communication skills. The emphasis was specifically on listening skills, and opportunities were given to practise listening and reflecting in a group context, with feedback from other participants as well as self-assessment. This theme was often introduced at the start of a course and included a variety of getting-to-know-you games and activities. Reflection and analysis of these activities followed, so that participants could reflect on their communication skills in the workshop situation.

2.2.5 Countering racism, prejudice and sexism

Countering racism, prejudice and sexism involved sharing feelings about prejudice, analysing antecedents of prejudice, and expressing outcomes and effects through roleplays. Strategies to contend with and prevent prejudice, racism and sexism were developed. An understanding of the above concepts at a personal level was encouraged. Victims as well as perpetrators of racism and prejudice were given opportunities to share their feelings and explore the impact of prejudice on their lives.

2.2.6 Stress management

This important theme focused on self-assessment of stress levels, identifying the antecedents and causes of stress as well as identifying and dealing with existing stress. In addition strategies for stress prevention were discussed.

2.2.7 Facilitation skills

This component was added for those courses where facilitation skills were requested. Participants were given opportunities for hands-on practice and their own attempts at facilitation were videotaped and analysed. The group, consisting of the respective participants as well as the facilitator, gave feedback with the focus on what the participants did well. Participants were encouraged to design their own workshops and use the skills they had accessed in the course.

The above content themes were presented with variations depending on the needs and choices of participants, size of group and time available. It was found that the sessions could not be separated as the constructs were linked. Often, cross-referencing and consolidation of constructs would be part of the sessions, and themes would form a unit instead of separate workshops.

2.3 METHODS OF LIFESKILLS COURSES

The methods of lifeskills courses were specifically developed to assist in achieving the aims of the Lifeskills Project. The methods were designed to be conducive to lifeskills acquisition (Rooth, 1995, 1997a).

Emancipatory education was at the core of the design and implementation of lifeskills courses. Courses were facilitated, rooted in an ontological perspective of experiential learning and contextualised in-group interactive processes.

2.3.1 Experiential learning

Experiential learning is the process of holistic learning from experience, including reflection on the process, as learners construct their own knowledge in participatory interactions.

Experiential learning is seen as more than a learning theory, in that it is also a philosophy rooted in an epistemological perspective of emancipatory education, which permeates modes of implementation and has manifold implications for its use and practice. In addition, experiential learning is contextualised by the totality of the environment. See section 3.1 for a further discussion on experiential learning.

Research indicates that adults learn more when their experiences are acknowledged and used in the learning process (Clover, 1997:120). This is precisely why experiential learning was used consistently throughout all courses.

The existing experiences of participants were incorporated. Personal skill development was emphasised and ample opportunities were given for expression of feelings. Opportunities to practise skills in the confines of a safe environment were given. Participants were involved in the learning experiences at a personal level.

2.3.2 Reflection

Reflection is a facet of experiential learning that has potential for enhancing learning. It refers to the ability to think about what has been experienced and learnt, become

aware of feelings, realisations and insights as well as an idea of knowledge acquisition and future work required for skill enhancement. Reflection enables participants to consolidate and internalise learning, and promotes skills development and extension. Without the opportunity to reflect, experiential learning will be superficial and may not have lasting results.

Opportunities for reflection were worked into the activities and participants were encouraged to reflect. Questions to assist participants to reflect were asked after most activities. The questions would encourage participants to think and express their feelings and thoughts on aspects such as what the activity meant for them, how they felt during the activity, what they learnt about themselves, and what they learnt about themselves in relation to the particular skill they were learning.

A variety of techniques were used to encourage reflection. These included verbal questions, small group discussions, reflection worksheets, journal entries and collage work.

2.3.3 Facilitation

Facilitation is the method used to promote the group process in a participatory and inclusive way, and allow construction of new knowledge based on existing competencies. The method of facilitation used was characterized by the promotion of power sharing and equality.

The construction of new knowledge based on existing competencies of participants, was the focal aim of facilitation.

With the use of action research and extensive participant evaluations, facilitation techniques were continuously refined, expanded on and improved.

Fundamental strategies for facilitation were used. These were, among others, the creation of a non-threatening environment, the encouragement of democracy and non-directiveness, giving clear instructions, using handouts productively, extensive workshop planning, relevancy of content material, appropriate level of presentation, encouraging participation in group contexts and time management to ensure task completion.

2.3.4 Group work

Group work is a method of participatory intervention that employs inclusive democratic practices and promotes the empowerment of the group in the context of community development.

The methods of group work used were experiential and the facilitator did not play a directive role, but a participatory and facilitative role. The intervention was participatory from its inception. Participants were usually involved in the initial planning process for the eventual group formation. Attention was focused on the creation of a safe environment conducive to group discussion and interaction.

Participants worked in groups, listened to each other and learnt from and with each other. The importance of equality and respect were emphasised. This meant that equal

participation opportunities and equal speaking opportunities were emphasised. This in effect resulted in all participants having the same opportunities. This prevented some participants from doing all the talking and taking over.

Group work involved participants in groups that varied in size. Usually there was a movement from sharing in pairs, to threes, fours and then five in a group. At times, group work involved everybody in the large group. This was only done once the group had worked together for a while and trust had been built.

Creative ways of dividing participants into groups were devised to make sure that participants worked with as many different people as possible.

Group processes were analysed and participants were encouraged to become aware of the dynamics and opportunities that group work offers. Problems in groups were discussed and participants were encouraged to express their feelings.

2.3.5 Continuity

Follow-up and continuity were attempted, and achieved in most instances. This was done by having follow-up workshops where participants were required to provide feedback on what they had done with aspects of the course, how they had used the course and how they had developed. In addition, follow-up questionnaires were given to determine further evaluation of the interventions. Continuity was attempted by on-going consultations, networking and the formation of support groups.

For each group, one or two participants did not attend the follow-up sessions due to work commitments or distance they were for instance based in Gauteng and found it too expensive just to fly up for one session. However, this number was minimal and never amounted to more than 10 % of the participants. The continuity sessions were to consolidate the course, give space to participants to show how they had used the course, how it impacted them and what changes they had made. It also gave them the opportunity to support each other through the sharing of both successes and problems experienced.

As part of their course, participants made visual representations of their commitments to implement the course. This was usually done in clay. Participants would take the clay objects home as tangible reminders of their potential to extend themselves and their commitments to implement the course. During the follow-up sessions, they would address these commitments and share their progress. This allowed for continuity.

2.3.6 Active participation

The idea that participants accept responsibility for their own learning underlies active participation.

Participants were encouraged to participate actively in generating their own learning at all times. The courses were hands-on, and involved the participants in all aspects.

Active participation was encouraged through the use of innovative and alternative strategies.

2.3.7 *Creative media and alternative strategies*

A variety of creative media and strategies were employed. The reason for this was to encourage active participation and ensure that a range of different learning styles were accommodated.

The emphasis was not only on the written word. Many non-verbal learning experiences were included, for example music and movement, mime, play, drawing, mask making, clay-work, collage making and seed sorting. Brainstorming techniques, group discussions, role-play, buzz groups, case studies, story telling, the use of metaphor and group object making were also utilised.

Extensive use was made of games and ice-breakers. The reason was that once participants felt relaxed and at ease, they could learn together and share easily. At all times an environment conducive to learning was created.

2.4 PARTICIPANTS

The participants were representative of the many cultures in South Africa. Courses were conducted in the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Province and Gauteng, and included participants from urban and rural areas. Participants from other parts of the country and Namibia also attended courses based in Cape Town. The majority of participants were from previously disadvantaged areas.

See Chapter 5 for a description of the sample demographics.

2.5 DELIMITATION

The research had to be delimited due to the multivariate constituents of such a broad-based and eclectic intervention.

This study will not research the many excellent programmes that use experiential learning in natural settings, and that are already well documented (Ewert, 1996; Krost, 1997). This project will not focus on the content of lifeskills courses in detail, as it has been done elsewhere (Rooth, 1995). Specific evaluation of courses has also been done previously (Lifeskills Project, UCT, 1994), and will not be a focus of this research project.

The research project will delimit its research to

- a focus on constructs pertinent to the methodology of lifeskills courses as run by the Lifeskills Project. These are experiential learning, group work, facilitation, lifeskills and the environment;
- data obtained from participants in lifeskills courses (TST, questionnaire and interviews) that elucidate self-constructs. The data will be delimited to operational categories for use in the present research project;
- the design of new workshops integrating environmental constructs in lifeskills as content matter.

2.6 KEY AIMS

The aims of this research project fall in two categories, firstly to ascertain changes in self-constructs as a function of the intervention and, secondly, secondly to investigate conceptual considerations.

2.6.1 Self-constructs

The aim of the research is to investigate constructs revolving around the self, such as self-perceptions, locus of control, empowerment and capacity building. The research project will attend to two aspects.

(a) Enhanced self-perceptions

Whether there are significant enhanced self-perceptions as a result of the intervention.

(b) Empowerment and capacity building

Whether the intervention leads to empowerment and capacity building, concomitant to increased effective participation in communities, organisations and the environment.

2.6.2 Conceptual investigation

This research project aims to explicate the conceptual constructs pertaining to lifeskills courses.

(a) Conceptual constructs

The following conceptual constructs and their ramifications will be investigated:

- Experiential learning as learning theory
- Group work as context in which the intervention occurs
- Facilitation as method
- Lifeskills as content, in broad terms, and the environment
- Self-concept, locus of control, empowerment and capacity building

(b) Conceptual model

A conceptual framework model for lifeskills interventions will be developed. The model will be based on:

- action research indications
- an analysis and synthesis of conceptual constructs
- research findings of the present project

2.7 PRACTICAL WORKBOOK

The design of an accessible workbook for facilitators will be based on a synthesis of all the above key research questions. This workbook is the end product of the research

project, intended for use in the community. The workbook will include three sections (see Rooth, 1997b).

(a) Environmental infusion

The infusion of environmental exploration, encounter and awareness in specifically designed lifeskills workshops.

(b) New workshop series

The design of a specifically structured series of workshops as an outcome of the above model and research.

(c) Preliminary evaluation

The preliminary evaluation of the new workshop series.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL CONSTRUCTS

An elucidation of the pertinent constructs under investigation follows. The constructs were selected as a function of their centrality to the methods and implementation of the intervention. They are:

- Experiential learning, including reflection and active participation
- Group work
- Facilitation
- Lifeskills in conjunction with environment and environmental education
- Empowerment and capacity building, together with self-concept and locus of control

3.1 EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Experiential learning is a learning theory that regards learning from and with experience as the basis for human learning.

Commonalties contained in explications of experiential learning include a focus on experience and learning from experience. An encompassing definition states that experiential learning is "a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experiences" (Luckmann, 1996:7).

The recognition that people have inherent knowledge is a core shared belief among experiential learning theorists. We all "have an intrinsic tendency to draw upon our experience to grow in knowledge, develop our values and attitudes and extend our range of skills' (Kilty, 1982:1). In experiential learning, learning does not become part of hearing information from only the educator. Rather, learning becomes part of experiencing the information and making it personally relevant.

The experiential learning process has to be a collaborative venture between teacher and learner (Hobbs, 1992). This involves all the participants, teachers and learners alike, in a process of mutual vulnerability and risk taking, in personal challenge and in learning. The delimitation between expert and participant becomes academic and negligible. As Criticos (1994:158) states "at the heart of this emancipatory education is an alternative view of knowledge itself: knowledge is not something fixed which is transferred to learners. The epistemology of emancipatory education is a perspective that regards knowledge as constructed by learners. Learners in emancipatory education are creators rather than consumers of knowledge".

The view that learners are not empty vessels to be filled with expert knowledge is a strong underlying principle of experiential learning. "Development is more and more

seen as an awakening process, a process of tapping the creative forces of a much larger proportion of society, a liberating of more of a person's efforts instead of a 'problem' to be solved by the planners and academicians from afar" (Hall in Keregero, 1993:193).

For Moulder (1989:140) the experiential learning process attempts to encourage qualities such as responsibility, participation, co-operation, creativity, self-esteem and questioning. Murgatroyd (1992:175) sees experiential workshops as providing opportunities for exposure to processes and tasks that could affect the way participants act, think and feel. De Jong and Van der Hoorn (1993:233), in describing mostly experiential workshops, recommend that such workshops provide information, opportunities for learning, the necessary support as well as networking for more South Africans to commit themselves to democratising their lives on a political as well as social basis.

The findings of Hall and Hall (1996:19) that experiential learning offers participants the opportunity to widen their repertoire of behaviour in interpersonal situations, which in turn increases their ability to cope more effectively as situations arise, add to the findings of practitioners using and researching experiential learning.

Carver (1996:8) sees experiential education as an interdisciplinary field and holistic as it addresses learners in their totality. In addition, experience itself is seen in totality. Holdstock (1987:121) cites progressive schools propounding the belief in the totality of the person as reflected in a concern for the affective-experiential component of the learning process. Postle (1994:33) regards attending to the whole of experience as appearing to lead to the generation of realistic, useful and relevant knowledge directly supportive of human flourishing, while Palmer (1990:107) emphasises that "the way we know has powerful implications for the way we live".

Boud (1988) propounds that learning is best facilitated when the learners' cognitive, affective and behavioural domains are engaged in the process at the same time, and can function integratively. Johnston and Usher (1996) argue for experience not to be subordinated to and separated from knowledge, but for experience and knowledge to be seen as dynamically interactive. It is precisely this interplay between experience and knowledge that leads to experiential learning holding much potential for learning in general.

For the purposes of the present research project, experiential learning will be defined as *the process of holistic learning from experience, including reflection on the process, while learners construct their own knowledge in participatory interactions.*

Experiential learning is seen as more than a learning theory, in that it is also a philosophy rooted in an epistemological perspective of emancipatory education, which permeates modes of implementation and has manifold implications for its use and practice. In addition, experiential learning is contextualised by the totality of the environment.

Experiential learning cannot be construed without concomitant reflection.

3.1.1 Reflection

Reflection is an integral aspect of experiential learning. Genrich and Hartley (1989:105) see experiential learning as a process of learning by experiencing something and then reflecting on that experience. This involves not only reflecting on the content of that experience, but also on one's own response to it, as well as the manner in which one integrates it into one's experience of the world.

Another dimension is added by Criticos (1989:66), in describing experiential learning as the process whereby learning is facilitated through an experience-based model which involves critical reflection and analysis as a basis for action.

According to Johnson and Johnson (1991:39) "all humans need to become competent in taking action and simultaneously reflecting on their action to learn from it. Integrating thought with action requires that we plan our behaviour, engage in it, and then reflect on how effective we were". The encouragement of reflection is consistent with Freires' (1972) term "conscientization", which is consciousness raising with a view to transformative action. "When we pause to reflect, we raise the possibility of transforming the social world through our thought and action" (Kemmis, 1985:147). Without reflection, experiential learning will be a superficial activity that will not necessarily have sustained learning results.

Reflection is a way to consolidate learning, internalise learning, promote skills development and skills extension (Rooth, 1997a:92). Reflection helps people to think about the meaning of an action or event, their feelings about that event, the learning that they construed from that event, the insights that they gained as well as the commitments they need to make to ensure optimal skills development.

In this research project, reflection is seen as a major constituent of experiential learning.

Involvement in the experiential learning process and reflection assumes a degree of participation that many other learning modes do not incorporate.

3.1.2 Active participation

Experiential learning presupposes attendant active participation. Moulder (1989:137) sees experiential learning as being, *inter alia*, about participation. For Lave and Wenger (1993) learning is a process of participation in communities of practice. Boud, Cohen and Walker (1994:6) reminds that experience is a meaningful encounter, which is not just an observation or a passive undergoing of something, but an active engagement with the environment.

By participating, individuals are asserting their skills, knowledge and right to choice and control. Through non-participation, people are denied the right to independence and autonomy. In addition, non-participation also often leads to non-sustainability of the intervention once the intervention is terminated.

The democratisation of South Africa has implications for educators in that their methods should also increasingly reflect this democratisation and transformation, with the emphasis on participatory and inclusive practices.

This need is apparent: "The curriculum, teaching method and textbooks at all levels and in all programmes of education and training, should encourage independent and critical thought, the capacity to question, enquire, reason, weigh evidence and form judgements, achieve understanding, recognise the provisional and incomplete nature of most human knowledge, and communicate clearly" (Department of Education, 1995:22). The emancipatory curriculum will involve the participants in the intervention, in action that attempts to change the structures within which learning occurs (Grundy, 1987).

Research indicates that people are more likely to change when they are involved in defining and implementing a specific change effort (Kindervatter, 1979:117). Keregero (1993:194) found that the higher the degree of participation, the greater the likelihood for effective learning and development to occur. Jordan (1997:3) points out that "history has shown us that the most sustainable form of development takes place when people themselves begin to implement their own lasting solutions to the problems that affect their daily lives'. Participation is quintessential for development.

With regard to environmental education, active participation is seen as imperative. Hildebrand and Hinzen (1996:167) see the issue of environment and nature as irrevocably becoming a part of developmental work. "Participatory methods have to enable participants to seek out traditional knowledge about their environments, to discuss this and to compare it with contemporary ecological and social information" (Hildebrand & Hinzen, 1996:168). In the past, there was exclusion of most people from decision making and information processes relevant to the environment (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, October 1996). This needs to be changed as a matter of urgency. Experiential learning, and with it active participation in the learning process, is one way to encourage participation.

Environmental education is seen to be fundamental for the implementation of environmental policy, holistic understanding and participatory skills (CONNEPP, 1996:13). The value of citizen participation and community collaboration in terms of enhancing the success of interventions and psychological outcomes, as well as general satisfaction and quality of life for participants, is well documented (Linney & Wandersman, 1996:260).

Kindervatter (1979:137) summarises participatory approaches as being functional, in that they give people power as decision makers, involve people as local leaders, base content on peoples' immediate needs and interests, pose problems that participants solve through discussion and action taking, utilise methods that promote self-expression and dialogue, directly benefit those who participate and operate on the take-over principle, by preparing the community to assume responsibility, through the development of new skills and capabilities.

The idea that participants accept responsibility for their own learning underlies active participation and is in itself contributory to empowerment. The present research project is concerned with active participation and its outcomes, and regards it of cardinal importance. Participation is intrinsic to group work.

3.2 GROUP WORK

In the context of its historicity, group work and its definitions depict an evolving understanding and implementation of what group work entails. Konopka (1963:29) sees group work as a method of intervention that helps individuals to enhance their social functioning through purposeful group experiences and to cope more effectively with their personal, group, or community problems.

For Brown (1992:8) group work "provides a context in which individuals help each other: It is a method of helping groups as well as helping individuals: and it can enable individuals and groups to influence and change personal, group, organisational and community problems". Brown (1992:8) sees contemporary group work as emphasising action and influence, and importantly, reaction and adaptation. The focus on helping each other and on enabling is a welcome shift that is indicative of the move in the nineties towards a less directive and more participatory perception of group work.

The value system that is profoundly consequential and promoted in this research project is democratic and humanistic, with the eventual aim of capacity building in a community context. The importance of the specific value system forms part of the overall conception. Glassman and Kates (1990:22) stipulate that "techniques without values and norms are dangerous. They may lead to control, domination, and coercion without respect for human nature and members' rights to determine their own processes and goals". This intrinsic concern with human rights, respect and equality necessarily permeates all methods and practices.

Brown (1992:177) indicates that group work is "particularly well suited to creating the conditions for people to discover and realise their potential and value, both in the group and in what they can take from the group to influence their living environment and help them take more control over their own lives". Corey and Corey (1987:25) view the group as "a place where participants can safely explore new alter" natives that open up for them and where they can test the reality of some of their plans". It is in the realms of this conception of safe space that this research project is particularly interested. Bhasin (1996:44) accounts that "the educational atmosphere should be such that it helps the participants discover the knowledge for themselves in a dialogical group situation, where everyone (both trainers and trainees) participates with a questioning and open mind".

Higgin (in Miller, 1994:131) sees experiential groups as having the potential for nurturing the kinds of changes in consciousness, behaviour and attitudes that are essential in order for us to deal with contemporary social and ecological problems. This means that group work contains within it the possibility of dealing with relevant issues that are of immediate import.

For Brown (1992:15) a group can be democratic and self-determining, thus giving more power to the participant, which is a prime attraction for those in favour of a more participatory, empowering and activist model of intervention.

Open discussion is one of the methods most favoured by practitioners of participatory group work. Brookfield (1994:24) emphasises that discussion is an educational method

that exemplifies a participatory and democratic spirit. Authentic dialogue and communicative discourse are often a basis for participatory group work.

Boud and Walker (1991:18) point out that each participant forms part of the milieu, enriching it with a personal contribution and creating an interaction that becomes the individual as well as the shared learning experience. Everyone has something to share and give to the group process.

Brown (1992:13) mentions groups as functional: much social living is experienced in groups, groups of people with similar needs can be a source of mutual support and problem-solving, attitudes, feelings and behaviour may be changed in a group situation, every group member is a potential helper, a group can be democratic and self-determining, giving more power to the client, a group setting is particularly suitable for some users of services and group work may be more economical. As Johnson and Johnson (1991:4) point out "the ubiquitousness of groups and the inevitability of being in them make groups one of the most important factors in our lives".

Working in groups is in itself an important skill. Often, this skill can only be developed if opportunities for group work are made available. Unfortunately much of current education is still based on individual, competitive learning and teaching styles. Wells and Chang-Wells (1992:28) lament the fact that in traditional teaching students generally do not have the opportunity to make their own sense of learning opportunities presented to them, or to do so in collaborative interaction with their peers.

Many people do not get the opportunity to learn how to co-operate, compromise and work in a group and community context. Group work does not necessarily come easily or naturally and people do not always readily interact in groups to the optimum of their potential. Since many group contexts of adult life are infused with considerations of power and status – we learn that success, conventionally defined, is often attained by flattering or mimicking those in power – it is naive for a discussion leader to imagine that adults can sign up for a course and engage immediately in democratic, critical, authentic, reciprocal, respectful discussion" (Brookfield, 1994:25).

Essentially, environmental education requires the use of a variety of strategies to learn more effectively, for example, problem-solving skills and making responsible decisions, using critical and creative thinking, and working with others as a group, team, organisation or community (Enviroteach, 1996:4). Glasser (1974:315) describes their research programme where a supportive learning environment was provided in a learning setting where participants could gain the self-confidence they needed to communicate their thoughts on issues to one another. After having exchanged ideas as a group, they would be better equipped to analyse what they wanted to do about the problem and agree on an action plan for resolving it. A continuing series of opportunities to interact in a group process, making decisions and then testing them with the real world in the context of a high degree of peer and adult reinforcement is necessary for this approach.

For the purposes of the present research project, group work is defined as *a method of participatory intervention, which uses inclusive democratic practices and promotes the*

empowerment of the group in the context of community development. The methods of group work are experiential and the educator does not play a directive role, but a participatory and *facilitative* role. This means that the intervention, from its inception, will be participatory and participants will usually be involved in the initial planning process for the eventual group formation. Attention will be focused on the creation of a safe environment conducive to group discussion and interaction.

Groups have to be facilitated in order for optimal learning to occur.

3.3 FACILITATION

Facilitation is the method of optimising the group process in a non-directive and democratically participatory and inclusive way. Facilitation entails the creation of opportunities for people to discover how much knowledge they already have, to construct and generate their own further learning, to explore their potential and consider the options they have open to them. Facilitation is the method that is congruent with the aims and outcomes of experiential learning. Facilitation promotes the idea that learning is based on building on participants' knowledge.

The task of the facilitator is to provide the stimulus and structure in which experiential learning in a group context will encourage participatory involvement. "Facilitation is a process of supportive drawing out: helping people to look at their own issues and come to their own decisions about how to deal with them" (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997:211). Rooth (1995:2) sees facilitation as the "non-directive art of providing the right stimulus for a group to participate fully in their own growth and move towards greater involvement in their communities". This requires the facilitator to provide the structure in which the intervention occurs.

For Rogers (1983:189) the "facilitator provides a psychological climate in which the learner is able to take responsible control. The facilitator also helps to de-emphasise static or content goals and, thus, encourages a focus on the process, on experiencing the way in which learning takes place". The focus on process is of cardinal importance. An over-emphasis on outcome detracts from learning and leads to valuable learning opportunities being lost.

Mackenzie (1992:83) describes facilitation as managing the way people work together in groups, while Hope and Timmel (1995:51) see the role of a facilitator as providing a process that will help the group to discuss their own content in the most satisfactory and productive way possible. This necessitates facilitators to be conversant with group processes and dynamics, in order to get the most from groups in the limited time frame that facilitators usually face. Nelson-Jones (1992:110) points out that a great deal of learning takes place between participants, and that "interpersonal learning and self-understanding come from sharing and feedback within the group as well as from the advice and suggestions of the other participants". It is this sharing and feedback process which is cardinal to learning. Nelson-Jones (1992:110) emphasises that facilitation skills should be used to create a climate in which participants help each other.

Linney (1995:11) explains that facilitators do not aim to maximise their powers, but rather attempt to bring about an even distribution of power within the group. Hopson and Scally (1981:113) emphasise their conviction of power sharing when they point out that "lifeskills learning will best be accomplished by individuals participating in learning alongside their peers and teachers". The need for the levelling of power gradients in environmental education is emphasised (Commission on Environmental Education, 1996:36). The notion of power sharing is quintessential to lifeskills facilitation. If this does not occur, the process may be disempowering and have the opposite effect of what was intended. Zimmerman (in Fetterman *et al.*, 1996:5) indicates that the "professionals' role becomes one of collaborator and facilitator rather than expert and counsellor", in an empowerment approach.

Facilitation encompasses the objective that participants base learning on what they already know. De Jong, Lazarus, Ganie and Prinsloo (1994:5) promote "a facilitative approach to teaching, whereby the primary approach to teaching is based upon acknowledging and drawing on existing competencies and resources in the students as well as the broader community". Facilitation is largely concerned with drawing on existing competencies, sharing and group feedback. The skilled facilitator will be able to get groups to participate, share and learn from each other, while the group use their existing skills to construct new knowledge.

For the present project, facilitation is defined as the *encouragement of the group process in a participatory and inclusive way*. This facilitation is marked by the promotion of power sharing and equality. The construction of new knowledge based on existing competencies of participants, is the focal aim of facilitation.

Facilitation as method is well suited to lifeskills as content matter.

3.4 LIFESKILLS

Lifeskills are essential skills that make life easier and increase the possibility of people realising their potential and becoming productively involved in their communities. Lifeskills are skills that enable people to interact meaningfully with the challenge of being part of the environments in which they live.

The common denominator in most definitions of lifeskills is the focus on skills required to cope. "Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour, that enable us to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (WHO, 1993:1). According to De Jong *et al.* (1994:3) lifeskills are defined broadly as "not only skills but also insight, awareness, knowledge, values, attitudes and qualities that are necessary to empower individuals and their communities to cope and engage successfully with life and its challenges in South African society".

Larson (1984:5) views lifeskills generally as problem-solving skills for coping with the predictable problems of development in the modern world, and Egan (1984:26) refers to skills as the "competencies that are necessary for effective living in such areas as self-management, interpersonal communication, and effective participation in communities and organisations".

Hopson and Scally (1981) regard lifeskills as self-help skills, and Nelson-Jones (1992:13) sees lifeskills as "personally responsible sequences of choices in specific psychological skills areas conducive to mental wellness. People require a repertoire of lifeskills according to their developmental tasks and specific problems of living". For Adkins (1984:44) "life skills aim at helping people clarify feelings and values, make decisions and choices, resolve conflicts, gain self-understanding, explore environmental opportunities and constraints, communicate effectively with others, and take responsibility for their actions". Rooth (1995:2) sees lifeskills as the skills necessary for successful living and learning.

The WHO (1993:5) offers a conceptual model that places lifeskills as a link between motivating factors of knowledge, attitudes and values, and positive health behaviour. Lifeskills enable us to translate knowledge and attitudes into action as actual abilities.

Lifeskills are imparted through lifeskills education. Donald *et al.* (1997:319) describe lifeskills education as "education interventions aimed at developing attitudes, skills, insights, and knowledge which facilitate effective engagement with life and its challenges". Lifeskills education is the process of allowing learners the opportunities to develop and practice all the necessary lifeskills (Rooth, 1997a:10). In effect, lifeskills education is about converting psychological principles and knowledge into teachable skills.

For the purposes of the present research project, *lifeskills refer to the skills necessary for successful living and learning, enabling people to participate fully in community development and holistic environmental living.*

If lifeskills are the skills that enable people to interact meaningfully with the environment, then the relationship between lifeskills, the environment and environmental education has to be investigated.

3.4.1 Lifeskills, the environment and environmental education

The connection between lifeskills and the environment is important. The more lifeskills a person possesses, the more choices such a person has to have an empowered relationship with the environment. Nelson-Jones (1992:41) sees lifeskills weaknesses as usually being maintained by what people do to themselves as well as by what the environment keeps doing to them. Giuliano (1995:53) points to a growing body of literature and research emphasising the awareness of the earth as a living system, with humans as organisms that are deeply connected to that system. Lifeskills education that does not pay due attention to environmental education will not be holistic.

The following is a comprehensive definition of the environment that will be used for the present research project (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, October 1996:9):

> In its broadest sense, the word environment embraces the conditions and/or influences under which any individual or thing exists, lives or develops. These include the following categories of conditions and influences:

- the natural environment including renewable and non-renewable natural resources such as air, water, land and all forms of life
- the social, political, cultural, economic and working conditions that affect the nature of an individual or community
- natural and manmade spatial surroundings, including urban and rural landscapes and ecosystems and those qualities that contribute to their value.

> The need and potential for lifeskills interventions to include environmental education have to be given serious consideration.
>
> Environmental education, in the process of being redefined, includes the development of a critical understanding of environmental issues, their causes as well as the skills to deal with them and must be relevant to the needs of the community in which it takes place (Commission on Environmental Education, 1996:36).

The implications that experiential learning holds for environmental education are important. Ewert (1996:29) cites well-documented beneficial impacts of experiential programmes involving an interface with a natural environment, indicating that many of the goals and outcomes of experiential education are associated with the creation of pro-environmental attitudes and facilitation of behaviour change. For Ewert (1996:31) experiential education can be a powerful force in promoting pro-environmental behaviours with regard to awareness building, attitude formation and empowerment, as well as providing opportunities for learning about the natural environment.

Whyte (1995) emphasises the need for a holistic and interdisciplinary approach. This is underscored by the Environmental Education Policy Unit (EEPI) (in Whyte, 1995:171) in the proposal that environmental education be integrated within subjects in a way that allows each subject to develop its own unique orientation toward environmental issues, concerns, and processes. For Giuliano (1995:53) an examination of environmental factors in psychotherapy indicates the powerful interconnectedness between humans and the rest of the world. Increasingly, environmental education is being seen as a multidisciplinary task where a broad range of teaching methodologies are used (Enviroteach, 1994:33). Redclift and Benton (1994:1) indicate that "the current phase of environmental concern has spawned among social scientists a much wider, more diverse, and more imaginative role for the social sciences in environmental debate".

It is this very interdisciplinary nature of environmental education that offers vast opportunities for lifeskills interventions that can be linked to environmental education. Carver (1996:8) points out that "if we are to benefit from our collective wisdom, we must be able to share and integrate what has been learned both in different settings and from the perspectives of different traditions". EEASA (1994:121) propose that environmental education should be integrated in all other subjects. Giuliano (1996:43) attests that "[a] new framework for our thinking and our teaching is required, one based on a remembering of the knowledge of the interconnectedness of all life in this planet".

Grob (1995) confirmed that the strongest effect on environmental behaviour stemmed from personal-philosophical values and emotions. No effects on environmental behaviour stemming from factual knowledge were found. This concurs with the views of Rogers (1983:20) that "[s]ignificant learning combines the logical and the intuitive, the intellect *and* the feelings, the concept and the experience". This holds implications for lifeskills interventions and environmental education. The impact that environmental education may make not only on the environment, but on the psyche of individuals, holds potential for positive change. Bandura (1995) indicates that peoples' beliefs in self-motivation and the power to be in charge of themselves, play a crucial role in their considering changing that, which is detrimental.

The most important connection between lifeskills and the environment is locus of control. If we believe that we are in control and have a strong sense of self-efficacy, we will become readily involved in strategies conducive to environmental health.

Common themes that are prominent in the literature recur, namely autonomy, self-efficacy, locus of control and enhanced senses of self. These concepts are seen to be motivational factors in healthy human-environment relationships. The ultimate and underlying aims of holistic lifeskills interventions are enhanced empowerment and capacity building.

3.5 EMPOWERMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Conscientisation (Freire, 1972) as empowerment through the process of people constructing and using their own knowledge, is the fundamental principle on which this research project is grounded. The constructs self-concept and locus of control are pertinent facets of empowerment.

3.5.1 Self-concept

Underlying empowerment theory are the convictions of self-concept theory. Self-concept refers to the beliefs, attitudes and feelings a person has about her or himself. For Jersild (1952:9) "a persons' self is the sum total of all he can call his. The self includes, among other things, a system of ideas, attitudes, values, and commitments. The self is a persons' total subjective environment: it is the distinctive centre of experience and significance. The self constitutes a persons' inner world as distinguished from the outer world consisting of all other people and things".

The self as the distinctive centre of experience and significance is of prime conceptual importance. The self is the starting point from where individuals proceed to a greater reality. The self is known as "the sense of the continuity of the self, the sense of our being the same person throughout life – despite the changes in our body and mind, in our personality make-up, in the surroundings in which we live" Kohut (1977:1790).

Mboya (1994) refers to the multi-dimensionality of the self-concept. In the many facets of dynamic self-concept configuration, a core remains that is inherently stable amidst the fluctuations of self.

For Horrocks and Jackson (1972:52) the self-concept is a "value based cognitive-affective symbolisation of the organism growing over time through maturation and

the accretion of experience". Burns (1979:3) indicates that theorists see "the self-concept as the most important and focal object within the experience of each individual because of its primacy, centrality, continuity and ubiquity in all aspects of behaviour, mediating as it does both stimulus and response".

The research of Wylie (1979:68) emphasises that the notion of self-concept includes overall self-regard. This is a generic term to cover global constructs such as self-esteem, self-acceptance, self-favourability and self-ideal discrepancies that could be determined by the combination of cognitions and evaluations of many attributes of self. Felker, Stanwyck and Kay (1974:2) view self-concept as the unique set of perceptions, ideas and attitudes an individual has regarding the self. The self-concept plays an integral role in human behaviour and needs to be seen in conjunction with concepts such as empowerment and capacity building.

Duval and Wickland (1972:6) explain self-knowledge as subjective self-awareness, characterised by a feeling of control over the environment. This is important for numerous behaviour manifestations and has implications for general lifeskills accrual.

A fundamental criticism of traditional education is its lack of ability to develop citizens with the self-confidence and skills to effectively deal with environmental issues (Glasser, 1974:315). Moreover, much of education can be viewed as potentially damaging to positive self-concept formation (Deutch, 1967:35; Dillon, 1975:324).

For the purposes of the present project, *the self-concept as a hypothetical construct will be defined as the views, attitudes and beliefs that a person holds, that are constantly configured and reconfigured.*

The notion of locus of control is closely associated with self-concept theory.

3.5.2 Locus of control

Donald *et al.* (1997:319) differentiate between internal and external locus of control as follows: "[A] predominant feeling that you can be effective in controlling, changing, or shaping your life space or environment is referred to as an internal locus of control. An external locus of control refers to the opposite – where you feel that your environment is in control of you". The development of an internal locus of control is congruent with the development of a general sense of control over extraneous factors. This concurs with the perspective of Murgatroyd (1992:179), who sees the extent to which people feel that their thoughts and actions are responses to environmental situations in which others play a dominant role, as depicting an external locus of control. Conversely, people who feel they are very much in control of their own environments, as well as their thoughts and actions, while depicting an understanding of the views and actions of others, are disposed to internal locus of control development.

The research of Rotter (1966), Coleman (1966), Phares (1976) and Bandura (1995) is indicative of the importance of locus of control situatedness for learning. Learners' achievement was found to be deeply affected by their feelings of powerlessness. A consistent finding in research is that individual beliefs in external or internal control affect their perceptions of performance outcomes (Von Bergen, 1995).

When people connect events in their lives with their own actions, they feel more in control and can function more effectively. Hall, Woodhouse and Wooster (1984) see workshops as aiming to increase the sense of personal autonomy that participants experience during the workshops.

A sense of efficacy has been found to differentiate between those who are environmentally active and those who are not (Hines *et al.*, 1986; Sia *et al.*, 1985; Manzo & Weinstein, 1987). This has implications for environmental education and lifeskills implementation. The skill of assertiveness is an important lifeskill that is described as "being active in relation to your position or rights with others" (Donald *et al.*, 1997:130). Caltabiano and Caltabiano (1995) point out that environmentally responsible behaviour is any action taken to ensure that ecological relationships among living things do not deteriorate. People who have an internal locus of control will be more prone to take ecologically responsible action.

Axelrod and Lehman (1993) refer to research regarding factors associated with environmentally responsible behaviour. One important factor is the degree of personal control or efficacy as an influence upon behaviour. Peoples' beliefs about what they can and cannot do are seen as important determinants of what they will do. Constructs such as response efficacy and self-efficacy represent individuals' perceptions of the ability to achieve a goal through engaging in a particular behaviour. This is highly significant for the present research project and may hold implications for learning and teaching strategies.

Sia *et al.* (1985) indicate that experiential education is connected to an increased level of awareness and sensitivity, perceived knowledge of action strategies, individual locus of control, group locus of control, and attitude formation.

This research project is intrinsically concerned with the development of an internal locus of control as an adjunct of empowerment.

3.5.3 Empowerment

Empowerment is a process that enables people to gain control of their own lives. It involves the development of both personal power and political power (Lazarus, 1990). This idea of control is central to many interpretations of empowerment.

For Patel (in Walters & Manicom, 1996:90) empowerment is "to imply a process of gaining influence in decision-making over the distribution of material resources, knowledge and the ideology governing social relations". Empowerment has also been defined as "a process of acquiring skills, knowledge and confidence enabling individuals and communities to overcome obstacles, gain access to resources and opportunities and make their own informed choices in order to improve their quality of life" (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, October 1996:94).

Empowerment enables people to believe in themselves, take control of their lives, feel in charge of what is happening to them and around them, feel motivated and confident to face the challenges of life, achieve their optimum potential, become involved in political change, participate, take ownership and control through collective political action. Hopson and Scally (1981:57) view self-empowerment as "a process by which

one increasingly takes greater charge of oneself and ones' life". The notion of personal power is intrinsic to most conceptions of empowerment.

Bwatwa (1996) points out that experiential learning techniques can empower adults through campaigns to determine, direct, decide, control and participate fully in their programmes at community levels. The empowerment of the participants as an outcome of experiential learning is quintessential. Grundy (1987:19) sees the emancipatory interest as concerned with empowerment, which is the ability of the participants to take control of their own lives in autonomous and responsible ways.

Brown (1992:25) cites empowerment models that have been developed in group work approaches as a response to oppression. A central theme in these approaches is the development of a practice theory that combines intra-group responses to individual suffering and needs with collective group action.

To be empowered means to be in a position to exercise or take control and thus to have increased access to power (Grundy, 1987:19). Kindervatter (1979:150) sees empowerment as gaining an understanding of, and control over, social, economic and political forces in order to improve one's standing in society. Being increasingly in charge of one's life is part of the process of empowerment. Having more choices, as well as the freedom to choose, is an important aspect of empowerment.

Serrano-Garcia (1984) notes three major aspects of empowerment: the development of an awareness of personal power; the development of an awareness of alternative realities; and the development of strategies for gaining access to particular resources in society. Communities that feel in control of what is happening in their lives realise that they have the power to change.

Environmental awareness and education should be based on the knowledge of the local community about their environment and should empower people to understand their community and work environments, and to take action to improve their lives (Schreiner, 1995:68).

In the present research project, empowerment will refer to *the ability and freedom to be proactive to change the impediments in the environment that prevent optimal living.* Enhanced self-concept configuration and the development of an increasingly internal locus of control, are major facets of empowerment, and lead to eventual capacity building.

Educational interventions that build capacity to maximise opportunities for development of potential are urgently required.

3.5.4 Capacity building

The importance of capacity building is integral to lifeskills acquisition. Any clichés attached to this construct have to be abandoned. The term is used in sincerity and with the concomitant seriousness that it deserves, in accordance with the use of the term in the RDP (ANC, 1994).

The RDP calls for empowerment and capacity building at all levels (ANC, 1994). Building community capacity is fundamental to the concept of empowerment (Mayer, 1996:332).

Empowerment, changing power relations, participation, equity and ownership are recurring themes in relation to capacity building. COSATU (1993:3) refer to capacity building as "a process which empowers people to become involved in the different initiatives of reconstruction and participate effectively in these". Capacity building is the process by which participants become self-determining (Mithaug, 1996:248).

Capacity building refers to the growth and development of people. It is a process through which people are provided with the necessary opportunities to develop skills to cope with their problems and to develop effective responses to lifes' challenges. Capacity building, in these terms, is not "a process whereby an external agency pours resources and skills into the community and its institutions" (IDASA, 1993:11). Instead, it is closely tied to peoples' capacity and inclination to use and build on knowledge, skills, information, networks and support structures.

September (1995) emphasises that building human capacities underpins all other aspects of the RDP. She points out that communities are only empowered to make decisions and to put them into practice when people have the skills to develop themselves, where there are democratic institutions through which people are represented and where resources are available. September (1995) urges that capacity building for reconstruction and development cannot be an afterthought and that education and training programmes, along with the development and resourcing of democratic institutions, must form an integral part of all reconstruction and development programmes and projects.

The urgent need for capacity building is exemplified in the statement that "capacity building and the holistic integration of environmental concerns into all forms of education and awareness building has not received enough attention. Issues of concern include past exclusion of most people from decision making and information processes relevant to the environment" (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, October 1996:16). Seen in its historicity, South Africa has a dismal record of capacity building. This was often apparent in unilateral decisions taken by the then undemocratic regime, and conveyed to education, which was generally autocratic and used modes of transference teaching, which in itself undermined the potential for capacity building to occur.

Community capacity is the sum total of commitment, resources, and skills that a community can mobilise and deploy to address community problems and strengthen community assets (Mayer, 1996:332). The need for building on community capacity, strengths, participation, utility and empowerment is paramount and underpins the aims of this research project.

With the new constitution, the right to capacity building is enshrined for the first time (The Constitution, Act 108, 1996).

For the purposes of this research project, capacity building refers *to the development of skills and knowledge concomitant with increased involvement in community building.* Capacity building enables people to empower themselves, and encourages communities to achieve their objectives.

The conceptual considerations in this chapter underpin the intervention as well as the methodology as explicated in the next chapters.

CHAPTER 4

PROCEDURES

The following procedures were applied. For more detailed information about the test measures, as well as the sample groups, see Chapter 5.

4.1 TWENTY STATEMENT TEST (TST)

The Twenty Statement Test (TST) of Gordon (1968) was used as a core measure of the intervention, which were the lifeskills courses as described in Chapters 1 and 2. The TST required free responses to the initial stimulus of "I am". The free responses to the TST were used to elicit and measure self-constructs. The data were scored according to the categories of Gordon (1968) and compared with the TST use of Fisher (1990) and Bloomberg (1993). The data were analysed by scoring and assigning each of the statements into one of the categories. From these categories, a delimitation of seven categories that were of relevance to this study, were chosen. The TST was administered pre- and post-intervention. The pre- and post-intervention TSTs of 200 participants from a range of 12 courses from 1989-1996 were analysed.

4.2 QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaires developed by the research project were sent to 300 participants in courses from 1989 to February 1996. The questionnaires were sent out in February 1996.

The recipients were chosen from attendance lists of 28 courses, including the 12 courses selected for the TSTs. The range covered a broad selection of professions, ages, and cultures.

4.3 INTERVIEWS

External interviewers conducted interviews consisting of questions designed by the research project, with 35 participants on a one-to-one basis. The interviews had a duration of 45 to 60 minutes each. The interviews were conducted from mid-1996 to early 1997.

The interviewees included participants whose TSTs were selected, and participants who returned questionnaires. The interviews also included participants who did not complete questionnaires and who were not part of the 12 groups of TSTs selected.

4.4 CONCEPTUAL MODEL

A conceptual model for experiential learning implementation was developed based on the following:

- Action research
- Evaluations and reflections of participants
- Facilitator reflections
- Data obtained from the present research project
- The exposition and survey of key constructs pertinent to the intervention and research

4.5 DEVELOPMENT OF NEW WORKSHOPS

A pilot series of workshops was designed and implemented. The design of this series was based on the findings resulting from the above procedures.

4.6 EVALUATION OF PILOT

A preliminary evaluation of the pilot workshops was completed.

4.7 PRODUCTION OF WORKBOOK

A workbook based on the findings of the research and the conceptual model was developed. The pilot workshops were refined and included in the workbook.

CHAPTER 5

METHODS

A motivation for choice of instruments and information about tests used, scoring and analysis, as well as sample demographics, are given. A comparison of the measures is tabulated. The planning of the workbook is discussed.

5.1 MOTIVATION: CHOICE OF INSTRUMENTS

The intervention comprises lifeskills courses run by the Lifeskills Project, UCT as described in Chapters 1 and 2. The methods revolve around TST administration, questionnaires and interviews to study the impact of the intervention on participants.

Hall and Hall (1996:8) indicate that experiential learning courses are difficult to evaluate in the traditional sense, and suggest a mixture of quantitative and qualitative assessment, as well as less traditional ways of collecting data that contribute to the learning of participants and provide data. Ideologies consistent with empowerment evaluation were taken into account and incorporated (Fetterman *et al.*, 1996).

An effort was made to involve participants in testing at a personal level and use tests that could add to their experiences of the course content. This meant that many standardised tests could not be used, as they were cumbersome, time consuming, alienating and included language that made them inaccessible to the majority of course participants. The majority of course participants were speakers of English as a second or third language, and this was a major concern in the choice of test material. The work of Shuttleworth, Somerton and Vulliamy (1994) regarding collaborative research was taken into account.

The pre- and post-intervention tests (TSTs) were deemed to be a useful method in that any changes indicated in the results could point to the role of the intervention. It was deemed not sufficient to base the entire study solely on one test measure. Accordingly two other measures were used, namely a questionnaire and an interview. A comparison of data could provide additional information.

The self-as-experienced is of direct psychosocial concern (Gordon, 1968:115). According to Gordon (1968) respondents' self-conceptions can be translated into self-representations, which will be made available to the researcher. Gordon (1968:116) points out that "we may work with the self-descriptions or self-ratings which the respondent is willing and able to give us in order to make inferences concerning his inner experience". The use of language to give expression to facets of the self is important. Prestructured questions that merely require a number or tick have specific uses, but can be limiting in that respondents may feel unable to fit their self-

conceptions into predetermined categories, or may not understand what the categories entail. As Gergen (1994) emphasises, the profundity of language due to its manifold implications cannot be underscored. The choice of writing responses in their language of choice also gave participants more freedom of expression.

5.2 INSTRUMENTS

The TST, questionnaire and interview measures were used to determine the effects of the intervention on participants.

5.2.1 TST (Twenty Statement Test)

An ideal test was found to be Gordons' (1968) Twenty Statement Test, which allows participants to think about themselves, in that they have to complete 20 statements starting with "I am". This activity promotes the self-reflection necessary for the intervention, and is, apart from being a resource comprising data concerning participants, conducive to the participants' experience of the intervention.

The rationale of the TST is to determine self-concept configurations and is an operational approach to investigating typical configurations of self-conception content (Gordon, 1968:116; Fisher, 1990). The way participants in the intervention see themselves pre- and post-intervention may indicate whether there was a change in self-configurations. If there is a change, it may be attributed to the intervention. The aim of the TST is to determine the way in which participants see themselves. The function of the pre- and post-intervention test is to determine whether there is a difference in self-conceptions as a result of the intervention.

The TST as an instrument for measuring self-concepts and self-identifications as well as shifts in self-perceptions has been used extensively by researchers (Manis, 1955; Mulford and Salisbury, 1964; Coe, 1965; Dorn, 1968; Faine, 1973; Zurcher, 1983; Fisher, 1990; Bloomberg, 1993). The weaknesses as well as the efficacy of the TST is well documented (Stryker, 1982).

Participants generally found the TST useful and indicated as much. Some participants indicated that they felt an enhanced sense of self-knowledge after completing the TST. Certain participants indicated that it was very difficult to complete the TST, but they could see the use. The importance of seeing the test as useful is in line with the philosophy of people-empowerment research (Reason, 1994; Fetterman *et al.*, 1996). Participants in lifeskills courses could not be researched merely for the sake of research without getting some benefit from it. By allowing participants to make conscious representations about themselves, the tone of the intervention was set. In addition, the TST is relatively short to complete, so the testing measures did not take up too much of the participants' time.

A further function of the TST is that it could give the facilitator information concerning specific needs and problems of participants prior to the intervention. The course could then include activities relevant to the needs of participants.

Gordon (1968:119) suggests that operationalising self-conceptions can be approached most meaningfully through a relatively unstructured spontaneousresponse technique

that will allow categories or attributes to be expressed. This is an extension of the work done by Kuhn (1960) whose "who am I" questions preceded the present TST.

Gordons' (1968) Twenty Statement Test was administered immediately pre- and immediately post-intervention to participants in lifeskills courses from 1989-1996.

5.2.1.1 Administration

The word "test" was removed from the TST form. The reason was to prevent anxiety caused by associations with the word.

Participants in lifeskills courses were told immediately prior to the course to complete the TST in about 10-15 minutes. Additional time was given depending on participants' writing speed.

Participants were free to respond in any language of their choice.

Participants were assured that the TST would be kept confidential. They were given the option of using a pseudonym, as long as they used the same pseudonym for the second testing.

Participants were told that they did not have to complete all 20 statements if they could not. Participants were also assured that there were no wrong or right, and no good or bad answers.

Participants were told that the results would be used for research.

At the end of courses, participants were once again requested to complete the TST tests, and the same information was repeated.

5.2.1.2 Sample information

A sample of 200 participants' TSTs was selected to be inclusive of as wide a range of groups as possible.

This meant that, for example, a group of youth leaders, a group of physically challenged participants, a group of teachers, a group of rural community workers, a group of urban community workers, a group of nurses and so forth would be selected to optimise external validity.

Group size usually varied from 15 to 20 participants. Selections of TSTs included all participants of the particular groups chosen, to ensure impartiality. This means that all TSTs of a particular group were used, regardless of content and responses.

SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

N = 200

PARTICIPANTS BY YEAR

1991	1994	1995	1996
30	88	52	30

The years 1992-1993 were not included in this sample as those TSTs were used in a previous study by Bloomberg (1993), that researched the same constructs.

SEX

Female	Male
147	53

RACE

Black	Coloured	Indian	White
51	81	25	43

AREA

Rural	Urban
30	170

AGE GROUPING

16-21	22-29	30-40	41-50	51-65
29	64	52	38	17

OCCUPATION

Educators	Social workers	Community workers	Health workers	Commerce	Unemployed	Youth leaders
41	49	35	36	14	10	15

Note: "Educators" refers to teachers, lecturers, trainers, environmental educators and student teachers. "Health workers" refers to nurses, doctors, occupational therapists, psychologists and community health workers, such as AIDS prevention workers. "Commerce" refers to administrative workers, managers and general workers.

5.2.1.3 *Scoring and analysis*

The pre- and post-TSTs of 200 participants were analysed according to the TST profiles (Gordon, 1968). The frequency of responses for each of the delimited categories was recorded.

The pre- and post-intervention responses were analysed and compared.

The 30 categories set out in the TST were delimited to the seven categories denoting the major senses of self, that were relevant to the present study. In addition, a section on value attribution as negative was incorporated, thus creating an additional aspect.

The reason for this delimitation was that not all 30 categories were pertinent to the study. Responses falling in the categories other than the delimited categories were discounted after assignment to one of the 30 categories. This in no way affected the analysis and interpretation of the data, and had no impact on the profiles obtained and the outcomes. The data were analysed by scoring and assigning each one of the statements into one of the 30 categories. The seven delimited categories were the focus and responses in those categories were extracted for use in this study.

A short description of all the categories follows:

CATEGORIES OF THE TST

A ASCRIBED CHARACTERISTICS
1 Sex
2 Age
3 Name
4 Racial or national heritage
5 Religious categorisation

B ROLES AND MEMBERSHIPS
6 Kinship role
7 Occupational role
8 Student role
9 Occupational role
10 Occupational role
11 Territoriality, citizenship
12 Actual group membership

C ABSTRACT IDENTIFICATIONS
13 Existential, individuating
14 Abstract category
15 Ideological and belief references

F MAJOR SENSES OF SELF
22 Competence
23 Self-determination
24 Unity
25 Moral worth

D INTEREST AND ACTIVITIES
16 Judgements, tastes, likes
17 Intellectual concerns
18 Artistic activities
19 Other activities

G PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS
26 Interpersonal style
27 Psychic style, personality

E MATERIAL REFERENCES
20 Possessions, references
21 Physical self

H EXTERNAL REFERENCES
28 Judgements imputed to others
29 Immediate situation references
30 Uncodable responses

The following categories were delimited to serve as focus for the current research project: Adaptation, goal attainment, integration, pattern maintenance, interpersonal style, psychic style and external meanings. In addition, a category for value attribution as negative value was assigned.

5.2.2 Delimited categories of TST

SYSTEMIC SENSE OF SELF

1 ADAPTATION: COMPETENCE. This refers to statements pertaining to intelligence, talent, creativity, skill, and ability. Mainly attributive.

2 GOAL ATTAINMENT: SELF-DETERMINATION. Statements indicating wanting to move ahead, deciding, ambition, self-started, self-motivated. Generally attributive.

3 INTEGRATION: UNITY. This refers to integration at the person level. Comments regarding level of harmony, confusion, ambivalence, whole person, straightened out, mixed up fall in this category. These are predominately attributive.

4 PATTERN MAINTENANCE: MORAL WORTH. This refers to statements reflecting self-respect, goodness or badness, honesty, reliability, trustworthiness, responsibility, evilness, dishonesty. These are mainly attributive.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

5 INTERPERSONAL STYLE. This refers to how I typically act. References such as the following apply: friendly, fair, nice, shy, introverted, hard to get along with, affable, quiet, demanding, good with children, affectionate, cool, etc. and are almost exclusively attributes.

6 PSYCHIC STYLE. This section looks at statements about how I typically think and feel: happy, sad, moody, a day-dreamer, in love, depressed, confident, crazy, lonely, curious, calm, searching for love, mature, objective, optimistic, etc. and are predominately adjectival attributes.

EXTERNAL MEANINGS

7 JUDGEMENTS IMPUTED TO OTHERS. This would refer to how popular I am, respected, well liked, well thought of, loved, etc. and are preponderantly attributive.

5.2.3 Questionnaires

Due to the unique combination of content and methodology in the Lifeskills Project courses, standardised questionnaires were not available for use. A questionnaire was

specifically developed to obtain information from participants who attended courses. The aim of the questionnaire was not to serve as an evaluation of the intervention as such, as extensive evaluation had already been conducted during and after each intervention (Lifeskills Project, 1994).

The aim of the questionnaire was to ascertain issues relevant to the study. Accordingly questions revolving around changes made as a result of the intervention with regard to home, work, attitude to self, self-belief and confidence, community involvement and locus of control were posed. Due to the mass of information accumulated, a delimitation was made of the information that was of particular import to the present research project. This in no way biased the data, but delimited and rendered the data operational.

The aim of the questionnaire was to determine if there were any changes in the participants who attended lifeskills courses as a result of attending the courses, with regard to their self-beliefs and levels of confidence and locus of control. In addition, the questionnaire attempted to determine whether participants had proactive relationships with their environments in that they made changes at home and at work and became increasingly involved in the community.

The questionnaire required respondents to tick selections as well as write their responses. Robson (1993:229) indicates the functionality of language as opening a virtually unique window on what lies behind our actions. Careful consideration was given to the criteria for good questionnaire design (Youngman, 1982). These included planning in detail, determining how the responses would be coded, ascertaining what the questionnaire wished to measure, how the questions would be put, question structure and level.

5.2.3.1 Administration

This questionnaire was posted to 300 participants of lifeskills courses in February 1996. Some questions required a tick in a corresponding box, while other questions elicited further information to clarify meaning. These questions required short written answers. The questionnaire had a broad base of questions. The data were delimited to accessing information that has specific relevance to this study.

Once questionnaires were returned, they were numbered, dated and scored.

Of the 300 questionnaires posted, 148 were returned on or before the due date.

In a test follow-up procedure to ascertain whether the non-responders would have completed markedly different questionnaires, a total of 30 non-responders were telephoned to ask why they did not respond. The following reasons were given:

- Did not receive questionnaire, i.e. got lost in the post.
- Had meant to do it and forgot.
- Completed it, but lost it before posted.
- Had posted, it must have got lost in the post.
- Didn't have time.

It did not appear that these respondents did not complete the questionnaires because they had any negative feelings about the intervention. They were generally apologetic and offered to complete them.

5.2.3.2 *Sample information*

The recipients were selected from attendance lists. The lists were representative of the years 1989-1996. These included the participants whose TSTs had been scored, as well as additional participants. The recipients were selected to be representative of a broad base of course attendees.

SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

N = 148

Participants by year

1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
7	7	8	19	22	40	28	17

SEX

Female	Male
112	36

RACE

Black	Coloured	Indian	White
30	54	21	43

AREA

Rural	Urban
19	129

AGE GROUPING

16-21	22-29	30-40	41-50	51-65
10	57	44	28	9

OCCUPATION

Educators	Social workers	Community workers	Health workers	Commerce	Unemployed	Youth leaders
32	42	21	28	10	4	11

5.2.3.3 *Scoring and analysis*

The following areas of investigation were selected for research in the present study:

- Changes made at home and work as a result of completing the lifeskills course
- Personal changes with regard to attitude towards self, self-belief and confidence
- Community involvement
- Locus of control

The frequency of change indicators was recorded as part of the scoring process.

Responses to questions 6.1 and 6.2 (What changes did you make as a result of completing the lifeskills course – work and home?) were compared to question 4 (how did you use the lifeskills course at work and at home?) which required a written response as opposed to a tick. In the event of the response to 4 not substantiating 6.1 and 6.2, the responses of 6.1 and 6.2 were discarded. This was to counter the effect of self-reporting (Argyris, Putnam & McLain Smith, 1985).

For question 6.3 regarding personal changes, enhanced assertiveness, self-belief and confidence were the criteria for a change frequency to be assigned.

Regarding question 6.4, community involvement, at least two responses were required in the affirmative before a change was recorded.

The information in question 6.6 was considered and if it appeared that an extraneous event had a major effect on changes made, the changes were not recorded as being due to the intervention.

A differentiation between positive and negative changes was made.

Questions 8 and 9 gave information concerning locus of control and were used in conjunction with each other. This means that an affirmative response in 8, which was not being substantiated in 9, was discarded.

5.2.4 *Interviews*

A set of interview questions was devised. In accordance with Radnor (1994), interviews were used as a particular method of data collection and analysis within the paradigm of interpretative research.

The construction of the interview questions incorporated issues that were highlighted by the responses obtained in the returned questionnaires, as well as cardinal questions that were not considered when the questionnaire was designed.

Cognisance was taken of the difference between espoused theory and theory in use (Argyris *et al.*, 1985). The weaknesses integral to research methodology based on self-report (Hall *et al.*, 1997:494) were countered in part by devising questions that attempted to find out how and why participants said they had changed. Indirect questions were also asked, and derivatives made to try to counter the negative effects of self-report.

The aim of the interviews was to obtain additional information, which could help to substantiate the information obtained in the other measures. Questions regarding self-constructs and empowerment were asked. The interviews aimed to obtain additional

information that was not obtained in the questionnaire, with one major focus being the methods used in the intervention, i.e. experiential learning, group work, facilitation and the participants' experiences of these methods.

5.2.4.1 Administration

Two external interviewers were used to minimise the experimenter effect.

The interviewers were briefed prior to commencing their interviewing. The interview questions and guidelines for interviewers were printed and supplied together with tape recorders. The interviews were taped and the interviewers made notes while the interviews were proceeding.

Once again the interviews covered a broad area, with certain questions demarcated for the present study.

5.2.4.2 Sample information

The interviewees were selected from the years 1989-1994. These years were selected to investigate the sustainability of effects over time. The interviewees included respondents of TSTs, questionnaires and additional participants who did not complete questionnaires and whose TSTs were not scored. Interviewers made their own further selections based on interviewee availability. Interviews were conducted from August 1996 to January 1997.

5.2.4.3 Scoring and analysis

The yes/no responses were recorded, after checking with additional information obtained from the further questions whether the additional information substantiated a yes/no response.

The following questions were delimited for selection as focal probes of the interview:

Interview question 5: changes made

Interview question 6: community benefit

Interview question 8: locus of control

Interview question 17: empowerment

Interview question 18: self-attitude, self-concept

Interview questions 11 to 16: regarding the following, aspects of the method of the intervention were focused on:

- Nature of the course – why and how, if different
- Analysis of the main tenets of the course:

  experiential learning

  active involvement

  reflection

  group interaction and sharing
- Sustaining of changes

SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

N = 35

PARTICIPANTS BY YEAR

1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
5	7	8	7	8

SEX

Female	Male
29	6

RACE

Black	Coloured	Indian	White
5	17	2	11

AREA

Rural	Urban
5	30

AGE

16-21	22-29	30-40	41-50	51-65
2	15	11	5	2

OCCUPATION

Educators	Social workers	Community workers	Health workers
8	10	8	9

Each question initially elicited a yes or no response, with further questions after the initial response. For the purposes of this research, the yes and no responses were recorded to render the information operational.

5.2.5 *Conceptual links between TST, questionnaire and interview*

The three measures can be linked conceptually. They measure similar constructs and have similar aims.

The aim of the TST is to determine the way in which participants see themselves. The function of the pre- and post-intervention test was to determine whether there is a difference in self-conceptions as a result of the intervention.

The aim of the questionnaire was to determine if there were any changes in the participants who attended lifeskills courses with regard to their self-beliefs and levels of confidence and locus of control. In addition, the questionnaire attempted to determine whether participants had proactive relationships with their environments in that they made changes at home and at work and became increasingly involved in the community.

The aim of the interviews was to obtain additional information, which could help to substantiate the information obtained in the other measures. Questions regarding self-constructs and empowerment were asked. The interviews aimed to obtain additional information that was not obtained in the questionnaire, with one major focus being the methods used in the intervention, i.e. experiential learning, group work, facilitation and participants' experiences of these methods. Specific questions regarding empowerment were also posed.

The conceptual links between the three test measures are set out below.

The discussion in 5.2.1.3 (delimited categories of TST) and section 3.5 refers.

The close relationship between empowerment, capacity building, self-concept and locus of control is evident. Goal attainment has implementation of change as an outcome.

Adaptation and integration have locus of control as an equivalent construct. Feeling in charge of oneself refers to efficacy and internality of locus of control. Confidence, self-belief and positive attitude to oneself refers to positive self-concept formation, which in turn leads to empowerment.

Psychic style, pattern maintenance and value attribution refer to self-concept. Attitude to self is equivalent to value attribution, and has an immense influence on self-concept formation.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: CONCEPTUAL LINKS

TST	QUESTIONNAIRE	INTERVIEW
Goal attainment	Changes	Changes
Integration	Locus of control (in charge)	Locus of control (more in charge)
Adaptation	Locus of control (in charge)	Locus of control (in charge)
Physic style	Self-concept (confidence self-belief)	Self-concept (empowerment)
Value attribution	Attitude	Attitude
Pattern maintenance	Self-concept	Self-concept
	Other events	Other events

5.3 WORKBOOK DEVELOPMENT

The development of the workbook was based on the results of the research project. As an additional measure, pilot workshops were designed and evaluated as a preliminary measure to ensure that the workbook was tested before the final product was made available (Rooth, 1997b).

5.3.1 Pilot workshops and preliminary evaluation of pilot workshops

A pilot series of workshops was designed on the basis of the results of this study and the development of the conceptual model. The new workshops were evaluated as a preliminary measure.

5.3.2 Design of new workbook

The end product of this research project is the production of a new workbook emanating from the research.

The workbook is structured in such a mode that it is user-friendly. It demystifies and dejargonises research. According to Sundstrom, Bell, Busby and Asmus (1996:503), the integration of research and practice is a predicted trend for futuristic research. The Commission on Research (1996:29) recommends that research be oriented towards practical benefit for communities. The need for research to produce practical mediums of implementation is well documented (Fetterman, Kaftarian & Wandersman, 1996).

The workbook encompasses the thematic aspirations of giving psychology away (Miller, 1969), emancipatory education and infusion of environmental constructs in lifeskills interventions.

Goal-directed design of the workbook included relevancy, immediate applicability and practicality for facilitators in the community.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS

The results of the intervention (lifeskills courses) obtained from the procedures applied in Chapters 4 and 5 are tabled in summary form. These are the results obtained from researching the effects of lifeskills courses on participants with regard to the delineated constructs.

The TST, questionnaire and interview results are given.

6.1 TST RESULTS (TWENTY STATEMENT TEST)

Standard deviations, 95% confidence levels, variance, correlations, Pearsons' correlation coefficient and average differences between pre- and post-intervention are tabulated for each category. A frequency distribution for all categories is shown in Table 2.

A paired two-sample t-test was performed for all eight categories at the 0,05 level of significance. The test statistic is tabulated. In each category the difference between the means proved to be significant. See Tables 3 and 4

The results in Table 1 indicate that there is a significant difference in the number of responses in all categories between pre- and post-intervention. The post-intervention values are higher in categories 1 to 7.

In the additional category 8 the pre-intervention values are higher.

6.1.1 Discussion (see following tables)

There are several significant findings worth noting.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

A preponderance of situational references (Gordon, 1968:130) that alleviated the participants from making self-descriptions in terms of enduring or typical categories and attributes, was apparent in a number of pre-intervention responses. The tendency was for participants to state facts about themselves during the pre-intervention test, such as "I am a woman", "I am a social worker", "I am Xhosa speaking", "I am a mother", "I am the breadwinner" and "I am sitting filling in a questionnaire".

This tendency was remarkably lessened in the post-intervention statements, where participants more frequently wrote about personal feelings and expressed feelings about the self. Statements such as "I realise I am a special person", "I now feel that I am worthy", "I can make a difference", "I am talented" and "I am happy" were predominant.

Table 1: TST results for pre- and post-interventions for 200 participants: number of responses for categories

	Number of responses for categories															
	Adaptation		Goal		Integration		Pattern maintenance		Interpersonal style		Psychic style		Judgement		Number of negatives	
	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Totals	185	402	51	154	80	165	127	221	581	814	855	1 185	19	54	274	57
Differences	217		103		85		94		233		330		35		-217	
Average	0,925	2,010	0,255	0,770	0,400	0,825	0,635	1,105	2,905	4,070	4,275	5,925	0,095	0,270	1,370	0,285
Av. differences	1,085		0,515		0,425		0,470		1,165		1,650		0,175		1,085	
Std. Dev.	1,165	1,728	0,501	1,198	0,737	1,01	0,925	1,192	2,32	2,919	2,86	3,140	0,326	0,64	1,819	0,753
95 % Conf.	0,161	0,239	0,069	0,166	0,102	0,14	0,128	0,165	0,322	0,404	0,396	0,435	0,045	0,089	0,252	0,104
Variance	1,356	2,985	0,251	1,434	0,543	1,019	0,856	1,421	5,383	8,518	8,18	9,859	0,107	0,409	3,31	0,567
Correlation	0,355		0,190		0,162		0,194		0,383		0,297		0,093		0,172	
Pearson	0,355		0,190		0,162		0,194		0,383		0,297		0,093		0,172	
t-test statistic	-8,87		-6,03		-5,23		-4,89		-5,58		-6,54		-3,58		8,32	

Table 2: TST results for pre- and post-interventions for 200 participants: frequency distribution

	Number of responses for categories															
	Adaptation		Goal		Integration		Pattern maintenance		Interpersonal style		Psychic style		Judgement		Number of negatives	
	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Score																
0	97	41	155	114	142	90	117	82	37	17	15	3	183	161	86	165
1	54	50	39	50	43	74	53	52	26	23	21	6	15	29	42	21
2	27	38	6	18	9	25	19	40	37	27	19	19	2	6	31	10
3	13	39	0	11	5	7	9	17	28	36	31	20	0	3	23	2
4	7	16	0	3	1	1	1	7	20	20	26	31	0	1	7	0
5	2	8	0	2	0	2	1	2	21	21	28	15	0	0	6	2
6	0	5	0	1	0	1	0	0	11	16	25	26	0	0	1	0
7	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	7	12	12	21	0	0	1	0
8	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	9	17	0	0	1	1	0
9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	7	5	15	0	0	1	0
10	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	4	11	0	0	0	0
11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	6	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	0
13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	1	0
14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200

Table 3: TST results for pre- and post-interventions for 200 participants: t-Test data

t-test: Paired two sample for means

ADAPTATION

	Pre	Post
Mean	0,93	2,01
Variance	1,36	2,98
Oberservations	200,00	200,00
Pearson correlation	0,35	
Hypothesized mean Difference	0,00	
df	199,00	
t Stat	-8,87	
P(T < = t) one-tail	0,00	
t Critical one-tail	1,65	
P (T < = t) two-tail	0,00	
t Critical two-tail	1,97	

t-test: Paired two sample for means

INTEGRATION

	Pre	Post
Mean	0,40	0,83
Variance	0,54	1,02
Oberservations	200,00	200,00
Pearson correlation	0,16	
Hypothesized mean Difference	0,00	
df	199,00	
t Stat	-5,23	
P(T < = t) one-tail	0,00	
t Critical one-tail	1,65	
P (T < = t) two-tail	0,00	
t Critical two-tail	1,97	

t-test: Paired two sample for means

GOAL

	Pre	Post
Mean	0,26	0,77
Variance	0,25	1,43
Oberservations	200,00	200,00
Pearson correlation	0,19	
Hypothesized mean Difference	0,00	
df	199,00	
t Stat	-6,03	
P(T < = t) one-tail	0,00	
t Critical one-tail	1,65	
P (T < = t) two-tail	0,00	
t Critical two-tail	1,97	

t-test: Paired two sample for means

PATTERN MAINTENANCE

	Pre	Post
Mean	0,64	1,11
Variance	0,86	1,42
Oberservations	200,00	200,00
Pearson correlation	0,19	
Hypothesized mean Difference	0,00	
df	199,00	
t Stat	-4,89	
P(T < = t) one-tail	0,00	
t Critical one-tail	1,65	
P (T < = t) two-tail	0,00	
t Critical two-tail	1,97	

Table 4: TST results for pre- and post-interventions for 200 participants: t-Test data (Table 3 continued)

t-test: Paired two sample for means

INTERPERSONAL STYLE

	Pre	Post
Mean	2,91	4,07
Variance	5,38	8,52
Oberservations	200,00	200,00
Pearson correlation	0,38	
Hypothesized mean Difference	0,00	
df	199,00	
t Stat	-5,58	
P(T < =t) one-tail	0,00	
t Critical one-tail	1,65	
P (T < =t) two-tail	0,00	
t Critical two-tail	1,97	

t-test: Paired two sample for means

JUDGEMENT

	Pre	Post
Mean	0,10	0,27
Variance	0,11	0,41
Oberservations	200,00	200,00
Pearson correlation	0,09	
Hypothesized mean Difference	0,00	
df	199,00	
t Stat	-3,58	
P(T < =t) one-tail	0,00	
t Critical one-tail	1,65	
P (T < =t) two-tail	0,00	
t Critical two-tail	1,97	

t-test: Paired two sample for means

PSYCHIC STYLE

	Pre	Post
Mean	4,28	5,93
Variance	8,18	9,86
Oberservations	200,00	200,00
Pearson correlation	0,30	
Hypothesized mean Difference	0,00	
df	199,00	
t Stat	-6,54	
P(T < =t) one-tail	0,00	
t Critical one-tail	1,65	
P (T < =t) two-tail	0,00	
t Critical two-tail	1,97	

t-test: Paired two sample for means

NUMBER OF NEGATIVES

	Pre	Post
Mean	1,37	0,29
Variance	3,31	0,57
Oberservations	200,00	200,00
Pearson correlation	0,17	
Hypothesized mean Difference	0,00	
df	199,00	
t Stat	8,32	
P(T < =t) one-tail	0,00	
t Critical one-tail	1,65	
P (T < =t) two-tail	0,00	
t Critical two-tail	1,97	

The prevalence of incomplete pre-TST forms, as opposed to more complete post-intervention forms, was remarkable. Many participants were only able to complete 5 to 10 statements about themselves in the pre-intervention test, while most participants completed all 20 statements in the post-intervention test. The post-intervention tests were usually done in a shorter time, which adds another dimension to this observation. Although they spent less time on the TST as they were tired and wanted to go home, they filled in more statements, and wrote more words than in the pre-intervention tests.

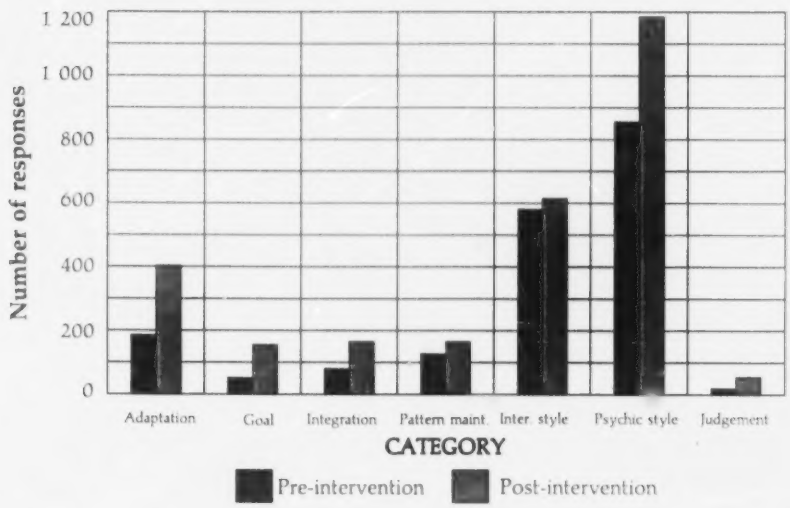
6.1.1.1 Systemic senses of self

ADAPTATION

Adaptation, and with it a corresponding sense of competence (Gordon, 1968:130), is indicative of how participants see themselves with regard to primary attributes such as intelligence, talent, creativity and skill.

See Figure 1 for an illustration of the differences between pre- and post-intervention scores. This category had a high average difference, which is indicative of an enhanced sense of skill acquisition and competence. This is congruent with the intervention, which encompassed psychosocial skill development.

Figure 1: Comparison of pre- and post-TST responses



GOAL

Goal attainment showed an increase, which depicts an increase in self-determination. Agency, decision making and commitment to attaining high-priority goals are attributes of this category (Parsons in Gordon, 1968:127).

The intervention at times included goal setting as content. Participants were accordingly exposed to thinking in terms of goal achievement.

Goal attainment is integral to motivation, proactive interactions, implementation of change and assured behaviour.

INTEGRATION

System integration and unity refer to the cohesion of the self. The developing sense of ego identity is the basis of positive self-concept formation (Erikson, 1975). The feeling of being in harmony and whole as a person are attributes in this category.

The close correspondence to statements falling in the category of psychic style, combined with a difficulty in discerning between these specific categories, could have contributed to this relatively small score.

The intervention was characterised by holistic practices and applications. This could have assisted participants in developing a sense of unity and integration. In addition, the opportunities offered to enhance and develop self-concept formation, could have assisted this process.

PATTERN MAINTENANCE

The language used could have rendered statements to be categorised under the psychic and interpersonal self-categories, as the dimensions are interrelated.

The fact that experiential learning acknowledges, respects and trusts participants, could have added to the change in self-perceptions regarding pattern maintenance.

The attributes that participants stated about themselves could have been influenced by the learning about themselves that was generated during the course of the intervention.

6.1.1.2 Personal characteristics

The categories of psychic style and interpersonal style received the highest number of responses. This concurs with the findings of Gordon (1968), Fisher (1990) and Bloomberg (1993). These categories had the highest average differences and were similar in scores, with an average difference of 1 165 and 1 650 respectively.

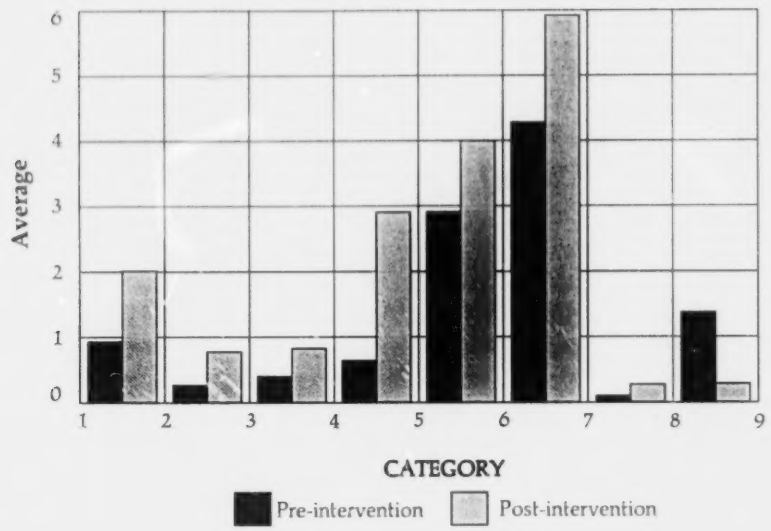
See Figure 2 for an illustration of average differences between pre- and post-intervention scores.

INTERPERSONAL STYLE

These statements referring to personal characteristics regarding others indicated an increase of 233. This is the second-highest score, and shows an increase in responses characterising how participants see themselves interacting. Attributes such as friendly,

fair, nice, easy-going, affectionate, understanding, easy to talk to, good with people and a good listener were frequently mentioned.

Figure 2: Comparison of pre- and post-TST response averages



These general self-descriptions could have been strengthened by the experiential learning process. Group interactions were continuously promoted. Ample opportunities to obtain direct feedback, as well as inferential feedback, from these interactions were part of the intervention.

The predominantly non-confrontational group dynamics, democratic practices, unconditional positive regard, as well as focus on the positive, that were basic to the intervention, could have assisted in the lack of negative perceptions of self in terms of the group interaction.

The inference here is that participants depict an enhanced sense of self in relation to others. The importance of such an enhanced self-perception in terms of general self-concept accretion, empowerment and sense of worth, is immense. The role of self-concept in relation to significant others is well documented (Burns, 1982).

PSYCHIC STYLE

Adjectival attributes of how participants feel and think fall in this category. These would include statements such as happy, serene, optimistic, powerful and inspired. These statements regarding participants' styles of psychic functioning were predominant in the post-intervention response content.

The high increase of 1 650 average in statements referring to psychic style is the highest average difference in the seven categories.

The process of experiential learning allowed for participants to explore and express feelings, as well as reflect on these feelings and articulate them. This could have been a factor in enhancing participants' ability to write statements about themselves. The participants' sense of well-being during the intervention could also have contributed greatly to this high score.

6.1.1.3 External meanings

JUDGEMENTS IMPUTED TO OTHERS

Concurring with the findings of Gordon (1968), Fisher (1990) and Bloomberg (1993) there are relatively infrequent elements referring to the impression participants feel they make on others. These statements do not refer to the individual as such. The statements refer to the imputed and generalised self, and include statements like popular, respected, well-liked and loved.

The interplay of language has to be taken into consideration here. For example, the statement loved falls in this category, while the statement loving falls under interpersonal style. For users of English as an additional language, the specific use could have been ambivalent.

6.1.1.4 Value attribution

This additional section focused solely on negative attributions to statements. For example, pre-intervention tests contained statements typified as "I am a bad person", "I am incompetent", "I am not happy", "I am not good enough" and "I am not achieving". As value attribution is a relative concept, only generally accepted negative statements were recorded as negative.

This category shows a remarkable difference of 217 between pre- and post-intervention scores. A total of 274 negative statements were made pre-intervention about the self, and only 57 were made post-intervention about the self.

The drop in negative value attributions in the post-intervention tests could be indicative of enhanced belief in self as well as an enhanced positive attitude to the self. The lessening of negative statements could be the result of the intervention, which aimed at enhancing conceptualisations of the self, focused on positive aspects of participants, gave opportunities to explore potential, rather than dwell on ineptitude, and occurred in the safe confines of acceptance and a non-racist atmosphere.

Philpot, Holliman and Madonna (1995:1007) discuss studies concerning the frequency of positive self-statements as a measure of influence on overall well-being. Of cardinal importance is the study conducted by Kendall and Hollon (1981), who found the absence of negative self-talk to be more important than the presence of positive self-talk to the overall well-being of individuals.

6.1.2 *Critique*

- Taking criticisms concerning the administration and use of the TST into account is important when viewing the results. The strengths and weaknesses of the TST should be kept in mind (Stryker, 1982; Fisher, 1990).
- Participants should ideally have completed a TST every month for at least six months after the course to ascertain consistency and sustainability of the intervention. However, this was impractical.
- The high incidence of social workers and community workers in the sample may have impacted on the results in that they may have been predisposed to self-analysis, self-expression and growth due to their particular work orientations.
- The majority of participants attended the intervention because they wanted to. This means that they may have been in need for a stimulus to change and ready for self-growth. Accordingly they may have been predisposed towards change.
- When the pre-intervention test was administered, the participants did not know each other in most instances, and could have been anxious about starting the course. Trust building had not yet occurred. They would thus be less predisposed to sharing information of a personal nature. Conversely, when the post-intervention test was administered, participants knew each other well and had been sharing personal information for some time. They may thus have been more inclined to express their feelings about themselves, as the results indicate.
- When the post-intervention test was administered, participants were generally feeling emotional as the intervention had just been terminated. This may have motivated some of the participants to express feelings about themselves more readily.
- As with most pre- and post-test measures that are the same, a degree of familiarity exists in the post-intervention test. This means that it may have been easier for participants to complete the post-test, as they had already had practice during the pre-test.

6.2 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The incidence of responses indicating change as a result of the intervention were calculated. The questionnaire responses depicted significantly high percentages of change indicators as a result of the intervention.

The results for the questionnaire are tabulated below.

Table 5: Questionnaire results: number of responses

Category	Number of responses	Percentage
Locus of control	119	80,41
Attitude to self	124	83,78
Confidence	117	79,05
Self-belief	117	79,05
Enhanced community involvement	93	62,84
Other events	36	24,32
Change at work	114	77,03
Change at home	126	85,14
	N = 148	

6.2.1 Discussion

6.2.1.1 Systemic and personal sense of self

ATTITUDE TO SELF, SELF-BELIEF, CONFIDENCE AND LOCUS OF CONTROL

From the results presented in Table 5 it appears that a high 83,78 % of the participants indicated that they had changed as a result of the intervention with regard to improving their attitudes to themselves. A correspondingly high 79,05 % indicated that they felt more confident as a result of the intervention. A similarly high 79,05 % of participants indicated that they believed in themselves more as a result of the intervention and 80,41 % of the respondents indicated that they felt in charge of their own lives after the intervention, indicating an internal locus of control.

Learning new interpersonal skills may lead to the development of a greater sense of control over interpersonal functioning (Hall & Hall, 1996:11). Internality is related to positive self-concept and high self-esteem (Lefcourt, 1981; Bandura, 1995). Locus of control as a component of self-esteem is well documented (Mooney, 1991). It has to be kept in mind that no pre-intervention measures were applied to discern internality and externality (Rotter, 1966). See Figure 3.

These results correspond to the TST results, and could have been brought about for the same reasons as mentioned in section 6.1.1. Refer to section 6.4 for a comparison of data.

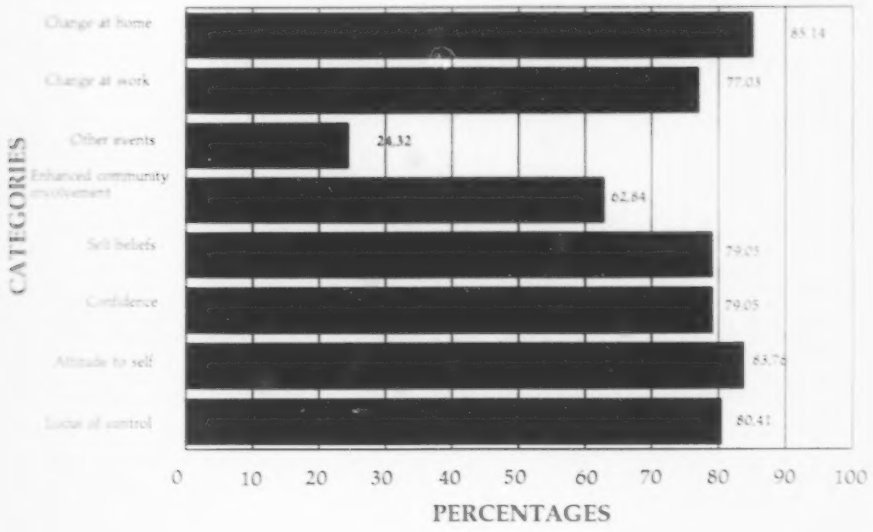
6.2.1.2 Other categories

CHANGE AT WORK AND HOME

A high 77,03 % (Table 5) of participants indicated that they had initiated at least one change at work as a result of the intervention. Similarly, a percentage of 85,14

indicated that they had made at least one change at home as a result of the intervention.

Figure 3: Questionnaire results indicating changes



These are indicators of participants proactively taking charge of their lives. Peoples' beliefs about what they can do are seen as important determinants of what they will do (Axelrod & Lehman, 1993:150). This holds implications for environmental interactions (Hines *et al.*, 1986; Sia *et al.*, 1985; Manzo & Weinstein, 1987). The consistent finding in research that individuals' beliefs in external or internal control affect their perceptions of outcomes such as performance (Von Bergen, 1995:739), has major implications for the actions that people take.

OTHER EVENTS RESPONSIBLE FOR CHANGES

A total of 24,32 % (Table 5) of respondents indicated that other events and courses may have contributed to the changes that they indicated they had made as a result of the intervention. This has to be kept in mind when assessing scores, as it was a measure to try to control for some of the many extraneous variables.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A percentage of 62,84 (Table 5) indicated that they had become more involved in the community as a result of the intervention. This score is relatively low, but has to be seen in the context that most participants were already involved in community work. For example, social workers did not indicate that they had become more involved. However some indicated that the intensity of their involvement had increased. The question was ambiguous and needed to be defined further.

6.2.2 Critique

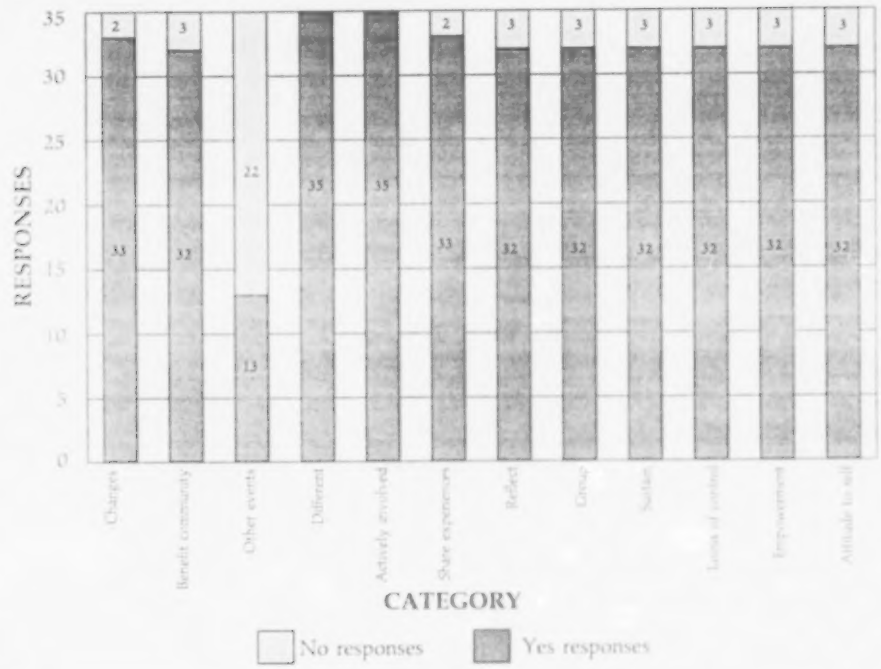
- General criticisms of questionnaires should be taken into account (Robson, 1993; Youngman, 1982) when viewing the results.
- The intervention emphasised that participants were responsible for generating their own learning. Accordingly participants may have felt the need to indicate that they had benefited. Self-assessments are open to criticism. The gap between what participants said they did and what they actually did is a weakness of research methodology based on self-report. The notions of espoused theory and theory in use are important when viewing the results (Argyris *et al.*, 1985; Hall *et al.*, 1997). The possibility that some participants may have inflated senses of self, and that they may have exaggerated their skills and senses of self in their self-attributions, has to be taken into account (Fisher, 1990).
- Participants may have wanted to please and accordingly given what they thought were the "right" responses. Many participants hold the Lifeskills Project, UCT, in high esteem and may have been biased in their self-reports.
- It may have been easy to tick the "correct" boxes without giving it too much thought. Although a few additional questions were posed to ascertain the validity of the ticks, further questions could have added to the information obtained.
- Memory effects have to be taken into account. Although long-term learning and sustained learning may be indicated, some participants may have forgotten and just put down what they thought they "should". It would have been useful to have an additional box to tick after each question, containing a "I can't remember" option.
- In the process of operationalising the data, significant aspects of the information could have been lost.

6.3 INTERVIEW RESULTS

The yes and no responses were enumerated and percentages calculated (see Table 6). A high percentage of participants indicated changes as a result of the intervention. The results indicate similar findings to the results obtained in the questionnaires. A high percentage of 91,4 participants indicated enhanced sense of internal locus of control, empowerment and positive attitude to self. These categories were obtained from questions 8, 17, and 18, in conjunction with questions 3 and 4.

Similarly, a high 94,2 % indicated that they had made changes as a result of the intervention. See Figure 4.

Figure 4: Interview results: yes/no responses



6.3.1 Discussion

6.3.1.1 Personal and systemic self

ATTITUDE TO SELF, LOCUS OF CONTROL AND EMPOWERMENT

A high 91,4 % of the interviewees (Table 6) indicated that the course led to ther own empowerment and capacity building, improvement of attitudes towards themselves and enhanced internality of locus of control as a result of the intervention.

Hall *et al.* (1997) confirms the role of experiential learning in developing internality of locus of control and positive attitude formation.

6.3.1.2 Community benefit

Ninety-one comma four percent (Table 6) indicated that their communities had benefited from their having attended the course. The importance of focusing on self-empowerment for community empowerment is highlighted here. This is a higher incidence than the 62,84 % (Table 6) who indicated in the questionnaire that they had become more involved in the community. The way the questions were put could account for this difference. Interviewees had more time to expand on the question. Interviewees may also have felt a degree of pressure to indicate their community involvement, as it may have been perceived as "the right thing to say".

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Table 6: Interview results: number of responses

	QUESTION	YES	NO	DIFFERENCE	PERCENTAGE YES
GENERAL	Changes	33	2	31	94,2
	Benefit community	32	3	29	91,4
	Other events	13	22	-9	37,1
COURSE	Different	35	0	35	100,0
	Actively involved	35	0	35	100,0
	Share experiences	33	2	31	94,2
	Reflect	32	3	29	91,4
	Group	32	3	29	91,4
	Sustain	32	3	29	91,4
SELF	Locus of control	32	3	29	91,4
	Empowerment	32	3	29	91,4
	Attitude to self	32	3	29	91,4
Total		373	47	326	
80	N = 35				

6.3.1.3 Change

A high percentage of 94,2 of the sample said that they had made changes as a result of the intervention. Of note is that 37 % of the interviewees indicated that other events had had an impact (often in combination with and as a result of the intervention), and were partly responsible for changes indicated. This is an indication of the extraneous variables that impact on the results, and should be taken into account. The findings with regard to change indications correspond with the findings of Sia *et al.* (1985) who see the goals and outcomes of experiential learning as being associated with behaviour change.

6.3.1.4 The intervention as an experiential learning encounter

There was a 100 % (Table 6) indication that the course was different from other courses attended. The reason for this high incidence could have been that some participants had not attended many workshop-type courses before.

There was also a 100 % indication of active participation. It would have been virtually impossible for participants not to participate, as the activities were structured to include them actively. However, participants were always given the option to not participate if they chose. This option was not used.

A high 91,43 % indicated that they had reflected during the intervention.

Sharing with the group was indicated by 94,29 %, and 91,43 % indicated that the group had affected them in a positive way. This is contiguous to the conceptual model for experiential learning.

Participants showed an in-depth awareness of the processes of experiential learning. This could possibly be due to the opportunities for reflection, follow-up and practice. Participants were able to comment in detail with regard to the main categories.

The 91,43 % of interviewees who indicated that they were able to sustain changes, adds value to the experiential learning process as a durable intervention that renders results over time periods.

6.3.2 Critique

In viewing these results, it is necessary to take the following into account:

- The experience of being face-to-face with an interviewer may have resulted in pressure on the interviewees to say "the right thing" or please the interviewer. Favourable self-report (Roth, Snyder and Pace, 1986) has to be taken into consideration. Hall *et al.* (1997:494) found limitations in self-reporting.
- The interview was rather long and repetitive. Interviewee fatigue has to be taken into account.
- Some of the interviewees enjoyed the opportunity to talk, share and be listened to. Reason (1994:87) found that respondents "wanted to talk and talk", which was confirmed in the present study. The interviewees may have tried to prolong the interview and one way to do so would be to enthuse about the intervention.

- Participants generally feel very positive about the intervention, and may not be totally objective in their assessments of all aspects.
- The sample was relatively small and may not have been representative of all participants who attended courses.

6.4 COMPARISON OF THE RESULTS OF THE THREE TEST MEASURES

The three test measures focused on the same constructs in different ways. Where the TST was more indirect and required free responses, from which derivations were made, both the questionnaire and interview were more direct, and depended solely on self-assessment.

The similarity in results is indicative of the closeness in measurement of these constructs. The questionnaire and interview measures, apart from eliciting additional information about the constructs under investigation, give the TST additional credence and substance.

6.4.1 Comparison of questionnaire and interview data

A comparison (Table 7) of percentages depicts the close correspondence between the results of these two measures.

Locus of control (as specifically defined and measured in this research project) in both measures as 80,41 % and 91,43 % respectively, and attitude to self as 83,78 % and 91,43 % shows a high degree of correspondence.

Table 7: Comparative analysis: interviews and questionnaires

INTERVIEWS N=35		
Category	**Positives**	**%**
Locus of control	32	91,43
Attitude to self	32	91,43
Empowerment	32	91,43

QUESTIONNAIRE N=148		
Category	**Positives**	**%**
Locus of control	119	80,41
Attitude to self	124	83,78
Empowerment	117	79,05
Self-belief	117	79,05

CHAPTER 7

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: A MODEL

A synthesis of the following led to the development and formulation of the conceptual model (see next page):

- The explication of conceptual constructs in Chapter 3. Action research conducted and evaluation analysis (Lifeskills Project, UCT, 1994)
- Data obtained in the analysis of results of the present research project as depicted in Chapter 6

7.1 EXPLANATION OF MODEL

The conceptual model indicates the centrality of experiential learning as underlying philosophy and as affecting methods and outcomes.

The experiential process is essentially at the core of the intervention. The experiential learning process works towards participants becoming aware of the topic at a personal level, sharing this in an interaction with other participants and reflecting on the topic.

A core thematic activity central to the experiential learning process is implemented to optimise learning. Innovative techniques are used to optimise learning during this activity.

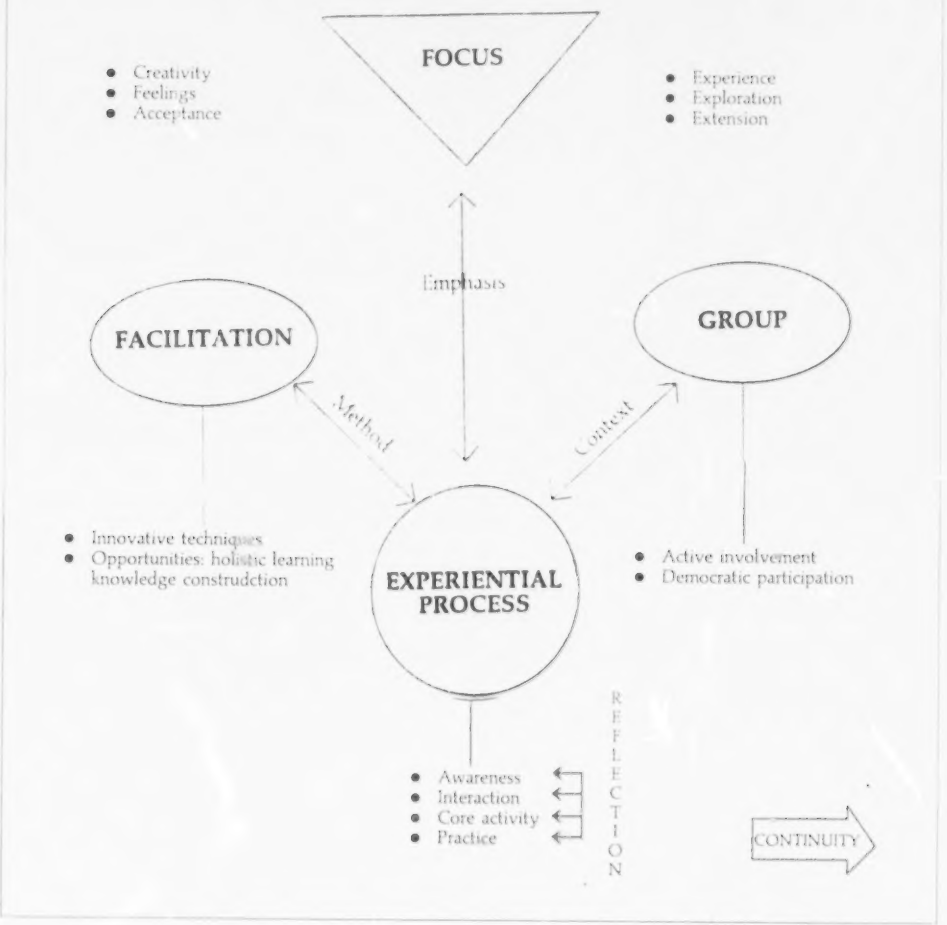
Participants will either get the opportunity to practise skills in the workshop, or be given the task to practise skills beyond the confines of the workshop. (See Diagram 1.)

They are required to return with feedback on their practice experiences for the next session. Reflection may occur at any of these moments, and particularly at the conclusion of the core activity, as well as at the end of the intervention.

The focus is on stimulating creativity, allowing expression and exploration of feelings and unconditional acceptance of all participants. An atmosphere and environment conducive to constructing knowledge from experience is maintained. Of significance is that the intervention is process oriented rather than product oriented. Participants are involved in exploration and extension of their potentialities. The non-judgement of participants and the creations that they construct during the process, is a prime condition. Positive feedback and encouragement are normative.

The intervention is contextualised in a group and there is continuous movement from small to large group interaction. Active involvement and democratic participation are encouraged. Earnest efforts are made to encourage group dynamics that focus on safety, trust, cohesion, co-operation and acceptance, rather than confrontation, competition and exclusion.

Diagram 1: Model of experiental learning



Facilitation is the skilled method of providing opportunities and activities conducive to learning and encouraging the progression of the group towards knowledge construction. Opportunities are created for learning in alternative modes. Techniques such as games and ice breakers, dance, music and movement, role play, art, clay work, mask making, story telling, discussion, debate, case study analysis, collage and object making are used.

Continuity is built into planning. Follow-up workshops are normative. Activities to encourage continuity are incorporated as part of the intervention. Continuity enables participants to transmit what they have experienced in the workshop to situations outside the workshop. Sustainability is enhanced when provision is made for continuity.

Experiential learning gives participants opportunities to view their relationships with the greater world beyond the confines of the learning situation. They are given opportunities to obtain insights about themselves and their interactions and

behaviours in the environment. Experiential learning is thus contextualised in a greater environment.

7.2. CRITICAL TENETS OF MODEL

The following tenets have been categorised

7.2.1 Experiential learning

- Education should in essence be emancipatory.
- Learning from and with experience is the basis of learning.
- The experience of participants is acknowledged, accepted, respected and used.
- Opportunities to actively engage in new and derivative experience are made available.

7.2.2 Reflection

- The cardinal importance of reflection is noted, and promoted through the making available of extensive opportunities for reflection, through guided questions, worksheets and time and space.
- Reflection contributes towards the meaningfulness of the experiential encounter.

7.2.3 Facilitation

- Knowledge is not fixed and transferred from experts to learners, but is constructed by learners.
- The sequencing of learning experiences is important and structured in a well-conceived fashion. Developmental sequential planning of activities is conducted with attention to potential outcome, affect and connection to other activities.
- Facilitation is the principal method in the encouragement of the group process.

7.2.4 Group work

- Experiential learning occurs in a group context characterised by democratic participation and active involvement of participants.

7.2.5 Self-constructs

- Learning is made personally relevant in an environment conducive to extension, as participants are encouraged to relate learning to self-constructs.
- The significance attributed to feelings is acknowledged and infused in learning opportunities.
- Self-concept enhancement, self-efficacy and internal locus of control development are of prime import, and this promotion is inherent in all planning and implementation of workshop activities.

- Participants are given the responsibility for self-generated learning as part of the general empowerment aim.

7.2.6 Creativity

- Opportunities for play, creative extension and self-exploration are emphasised.
- Through the creation of a safe yet stimulating environment, attempts are made to minimise mechanisms of non-learning such as compartmentalisation, insulation and ritualism.
- Learning is multifaceted and the participants are seen in totality. Whole-brain learning is encouraged.

7.2.7 Continuity

- Continuity is important as this encourages skill acquisition and consolidation.
- The formation of on-going support groups, to be run without the initial facilitator, is encouraged. This promotes continuity and capacity building.

7.2.8 Environment

- The importance of environmental contextuality and infusion of constructs from the natural environment has to be taken into account.
- Experience is a meaningful encounter that entails more than participation: it is an active engagement with, and involvement in, the environment.

The tenets of the conceptual framework model will guide the design and implementation of the workbook.]

CHAPTER 8

THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL IN PRACTICE

This auxiliary chapter aims to link the research aspect of the research project with the practical component. A rationale is given for stress management as the choice of topic. The research findings detailed in Chapter 6 pertaining to lifeskills, locus of control and environment are discussed. The implementation of the conceptual model is dealt with, as well as the use of metaphor and games as prominent strategies. Finally, the preliminary evaluation of the pilot study is discussed.

8.1 RATIONALE

A number of reasons are mentioned, notably the needs analysis conducted, the causes of stress as described by participants, the relationship between stress management and lifeskills, and the relationship between stress and the environment.

8.1 1 Needs analysis

A needs analysis was conducted to determine which lifeskill was regarded as most important or needed. A record was kept of requests for skills for workshops during 1995. The attendance at networking days with different themes was also monitored.

The outcome was that stress management was rated as the topic that received the highest incidence of requests, as well as the highest attendance on networking days.

In addition, during the process of action research that the Lifeskills Project implemented, evaluation questionnaires asked participants which topics they would like to have included in future courses, as well as which topic they found most beneficial. A high incidence of respondents indicated that they would like to do stress management workshops, or further stress management. In addition, those participants who had stress management as an option in their interventions, often indicated that it was the most beneficial topic.

As part of the action research process and in order to complement the needs analysis process, the causes of stress as expressed by participants were noted.

8.1.2 The causes of stress

A record of the causes of stress that participants in workshops mentioned indicated that the causes were linked to each other (Rooth, 1995:148). From these causes the following general categories of causes were identified:

Work, life events, socio-economic circumstances, political circumstances, environmental factors, personality, locus of control, health, lifestyle, relationships, duration of stress experience.

Participants in workshops consistently mentioned the socio-political environment as a potent stressor. Research regarding the severe stress under which people who were subordinated to the demands of apartheid lived, found that prolonged exposure to apartheid caused stress (Lambley, 1980). Thomas (1987) researched the oppressive socio-economic conditions of the previous regime and found psychosocial pathology, while the results of Turton (1987) indicate that apartheid-determined factors caused stress in an urban black population. Even though the previous regime has been replaced, the long-term effects of apartheid are still prevalent as stressors. The effects of post-traumatic stress cannot be ignored (Wilson, Harel & Kahana, 1988; Scrignar, 1990; Cole, Espin & Rothblum, 1992; Scott & Stradling, 1992; Peltzer, 1996).

The stress caused by poverty and homelessness is of serious import. The absurd and hostile stereotype of "the black woman as someone who is able to cope with all kinds of hardship and emotional deprivation as though she had no feelings or needs at all has for too long been the view held in racist and patriarchal ideology" (Lawrence, 1994). Conventional approaches to stress have adopted limited and individualistic perspectives, where little attention was paid to the broader organisational, social and political factors related to stress (Thompson, Murphy & Stradling, 1994).

Stress management and prevention programmes have not readily been made accessible to the vast majority of the South African population. This is an important lifeskill, which relates reciprocally to many other lifeskills. Stress can no longer be seen as the exclusive prerogative of corporate managers and white-collar workers. Stress is a condition that may affect anybody at any time, and prevention of stress should be a major objective of health promotion in South Africa.

Stress management is an important lifeskill intrinsically connected to other pertinent psychosocial skills.

8.1.3 Relationship between stress management and psychosocial lifeskills

Stress management is not an isolated technique that refers to compartmentalised facets of human life. Optimally it should be a holistic, multi-modal, inclusive approach that considers the human in totality. Current approaches to stress depict eclecticism and multi-pronged approaches (Lazarus, 1981; Davis, Eshelman & McKay, 1989; Powell & Enright, 1990; Murgatroyd, 1992; Thompson, Murphy & Stradling, 1994; Catalano & Hardin, 1996; Lark, 1996).

An understanding of stress underscores the use of lifeskills interventions in managing and preventing stress. Dunham (1992:3) defines stress as "a process of behavioural, emotional, mental, and physical reactions caused by prolonged, increasing or new pressures which are significantly greater than coping resources". For Burns (1988) stress is any demand that requires some kind of physical or emotional readjustment. Stress is also defined in terms of contextual demands and constraints (Hobfoll, 1989).

Researchers associate stress with negative feelings and responses when there is too much pressure (Kyriacou, 1981:193; Arroba & James, 1987; Thompson *et al.*, 1994). According to Lazarus (1971) anxiety results when people see a difference between the demands placed upon them and their personal resources for coping with these demands. Lifeskills intervention is primarily concerned with increasing the repertoire of coping resources in order for people to cope with demands that are stress inducing.

Stress management is the lifeskill that possibly has the greatest intrinsic relation to other psychosocial lifeskills. A brief description of links with other major lifeskills follows.

■ COUNTERING RACISM AND PREJUDICE

The effects of racism on stress levels are well documented. Neighbors and Jackson (1996) quote studies that indicate that racism is a chronic stressor and that it has a negative effect on mental health. See section 8.1.2 above.

■ CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

There is a close relationship between stress management and creative problem solving. People who cannot use their inherent creativity may suffer from stress and conversely people who suffer from stress find it difficult to be creative. Murgatroyd (1992:38) notes the relationship between stress and the "difficulty in thinking rationally and seeing a problem sharply from a number of viewpoints". Creative problem solving is partly about viewing problems from different angles and using lateral thinking.

■ COMMUNICATION

The relationship between stress and communication is dual. Stressed people cannot communicate effectively as they often become withdrawn and depressed and feel alienated from society. Lack of communication in itself can make people more susceptible to stress. Open systems of communication make effective coping attainable (Shaffer, 1982). Murgatroyd (1992:51) dealt with relationships and communication as an integral aspect in stress management workshops.

■ HEALTH MANAGEMENT

The connection between stress and ill health is strong (Totman, 1990:15). According to Margolis and Shrier (1982:5), "stress is the body's response to external and internal pressures. When intense and prolonged demands are made on us, our physical and emotional systems wear down and we suffer the symptoms of stress". Brown and Ralph (1994:7) and O'Leary (1990) indicate that excessive stress results in physical symptoms and physical dysfunctions. Managing stress increases immunologic functioning (Antoni, Schneiderman, Fletcher, Goldstein, Ironson & Laperriere, 1990). Healthy lifestyle development and health prevention are major facets of lifeskills education.

■ STRESS, SELF-CONCEPT AND LOCUS OF CONTROL

The relationship between locus of control and stress is well documented (Abouserie, 1994; Bandura, 1995). Stress management can re-establish internality of locus of control. Bandura (1995:8) sees perceived self-efficacy to exercise control over stressors as playing a central role in anxiety arousal, and points out that "although subjected to the same environmental stressors, individuals who believe they can manage them remain unperturbed, whereas those who believe the stressors are personally uncontrollable view them in debilitating ways". For Taylor and Repetti (1997:416) people who find proactive ways of coping with stress may be better able to cope with the adverse effects of stressful circumstances. The research of Hall *et al.* (1997:494) suggests that experiential learning human relations courses can provide teachers with a stronger sense of control over their own lives while at the same time causing them to experience a reduced level of stress. Depression and learned helplessness may result from stress (Kendall, 1987) and cause externality of locus of control.

Lifeskills intervention may facilitate a renewal of trust in the self, as participants feel able to master the environment in which they no longer feel threatened.

■ GENERAL LIFESKILLS

Aspects such as time management, goal setting and healthy living are intrinsically linked to stress management (Davis *et al.*, 1989). Kowalski (1993:126) sums it up well: "if we cannot make sense of our environment, our relationships, our goals, our feelings and values, then that creates stress". In particular, it is precisely this making sense of the environment that needs to be addressed.

8.1.4 Relationship between stress and the environment

Stress may result from withdrawal and distrust of the environment. Kowalski (1993:138) depicts the statement I am stressed as "an expression of deep distress in our inner and outer world".

According to Bandura (1995:27) "most human stress is activated in the course of learning how to exercise control over environmental demands and while developing and expanding competencies". Saegert (1976) indicates the stress inducing and reducing qualities of the environment. Studies by Lazarus and Launier (1981) emphasise the importance of examining the interaction between environmental stimulus and the reacting person, and see stress resulting when there is incongruence between the person and the environment. Woolfe (1992:15) found that coping with stress resides in the interaction between the individual and the environment.

Taylor and Repetti (1997) discovered that the environment exerts direct effects on health. Leff (1978:336) examines the ways in which human modification to the environment induces stress, with the emphasis on social and psychological factors intertwined with environmental influences. Hobfoll (1989) sees an inadequate fit between a person and the environment as leading to stress. The greater the incompatibility, the higher the level of stress. The importance of having a balanced relationship with the environment is indicated.

The combination of reasons mentioned above, as well as the research findings below, led to the choice of stress management as a theme for the workbook.

8.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS: LIFESKILLS, LOCUS OF CONTROL AND ENVIRONMENT

The importance of and intrinsic relationship between lifeskills accretion, locus of control and proactive relationships with the environment is the foundation on which the workbook is based.

The results of the research project indicate that lifeskills courses may lead to self-concept enhancement, internality of locus of control and concomitant empowerment and capacity building. This in turn leads to enhanced relationships with the environment (Coopersmith, 1967; Manzo & Weinstein, 1987; Hines *et al.*, 1986; Sia et al., 1985; Axelrod & Lehman, 1993).

Accordingly the content matter of the workbook focuses on lifeskills themes.

In order to present a topic comprehensively and in depth, it was decided to focus on one pertinent lifeskill, which closely related to other lifeskills, which was often requested as a workshop topic and which could be useful in further empowerment strategies for communities.

The way the topic would be presented to participants was based on the conceptual model that was developed as an outcome of the research process.

8.3 CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The conceptual model that was developed served as the basis of the workbook design. This means that in the workbook, the activities are presented in a facilitative style, use is made of group work, the method of implementation is rooted in experiential learning and ample opportunities for reflection are given. Continuity is important and activities to encourage follow-up are developed.

The contextuality of the environment is given prominence by being infused into activities.

The conceptual model was adapted for use in the workbook. The infusion of environmental constructs is an important extension. See Diagram 2.

8.3.1 The use of metaphor in stress workshops

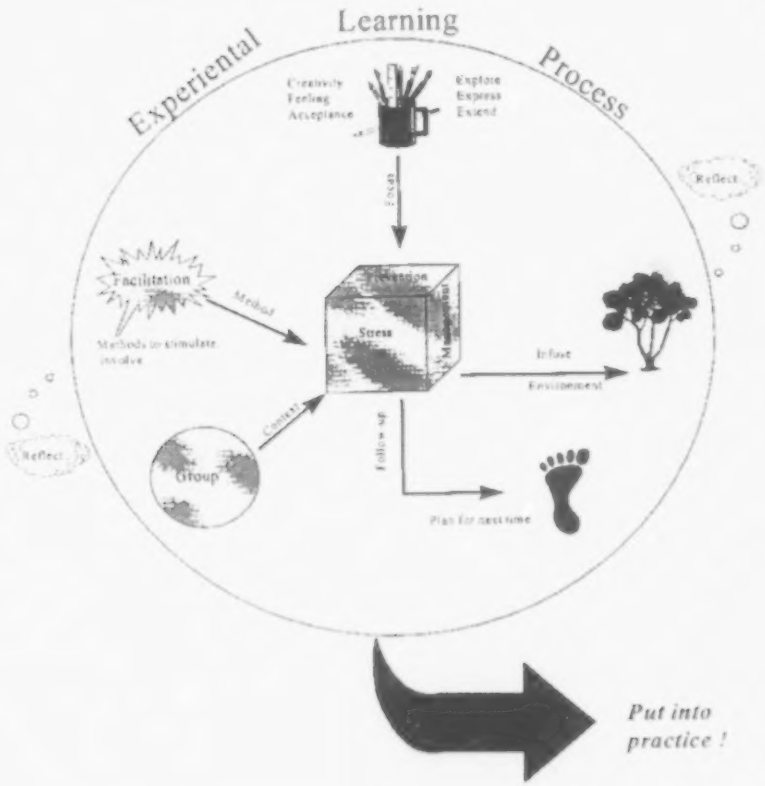
The use of metaphor is an important medium in lifeskills facilitation, as metaphor can be used as a tool for learning about life. Symbols and stories can encourage participants to recall, reflect and explore aspects in their own lives. By infusing environmental constructs with the use of metaphor, similarities and relationships may be discovered. It is possible for new concepts and meanings to emerge, as well as similarities to be created, through metaphor use (Indurkhya, 1992:14).

For Zeig and Gilligan (1990) the use of metaphor frees the participants by allowing them to assign meaning and choose an interpretation that suits their needs. Of note is

allowing participants to recognise that they have choices. Whole-brain learning is involved, as we relate to issues through metaphors with the right brain, and interpret and search for solutions with the left brain. Metaphor is a process whereby meaning is transferred from one situation to another that is in some way similar.

The value of metaphor use is primarily a function of the way we approach problems indirectly. "Because metaphors do not state things as they are, they tend to bypass conscious reflexive objections to ideas and interventions" (Bowman, 1992:440). This means that participants are given opportunities to explore the often hidden and less apparent dimensions of a particular topic.

Diagram 2: Research model: the basis for workshop design and implementation



8.3.2 The purpose of games in stress workshops

The use of games aids the creation of an atmosphere conducive to learning. Participants are able to build trust, relax and enjoy themselves, which makes them more open to learning. The use of games in learning lifeskills is well documented (Bond, 1986; Brandes & Phillips, 1987; Davison & Gordon, 1978; Jelts, 1982; Smith, 1990; Jones, 1991).

The emotional and deep psychosocial issues that are evoked in stress management workshops can be cushioned by games. Woolfe (1992:25) cites the use of games as changing the atmosphere of the group and found that the use of games demonstrated the connection between physical and emotional states. Woolfe (1992:16) found that play had value in changing psychological states.

Games form an integral part of stress management workshops and are part of the repertoire of techniques that facilitate learning and growth in an experiential context (Rooth, 1995, 1997a).

The use of metaphor is particularly relevant in exploring the root causes of a problem, in this instance the root causes of stress.

The conceptual model was used as a structure on which the design of the pilot workshops was based.

8.4 PILOT STUDY

The pilot workshops were designed and implemented based on the proposed conceptual model in Chapter 7, and the research results in Chapter 6. Environmental constructs were infused into the activities as an additional aid to cross-fertilisation between lifeskills and meaningful interaction with the environment

The initial pilot study researched the impact of the workshop on 16 participants.

Self-assessments (with regard to levels of stress) were obtained from a specifically designed questionnaire. Kahn and French (1970) emphasise the importance of self-evaluation. This assessment was administered pre-pilot workshops series.

Self-assessments with regard to level of stress were obtained post-pilot workshop series. A specific questionnaire was designed for this purpose.

Preliminary evaluations with regard to course content, process and outcome were obtained from reflection worksheets, evaluation forms and follow-up reflection worksheets.

Additional follow-up evaluations were obtained a month after the workshop series.

Contributions made by participants during the workshop series and at the follow-up session were recorded by two participant-observers.

A detailed analysis of stress, concomitant research and results are discussed in the workbook.

8.4.1 Results of pilot workshop series: changes in levels of stress

Participants had to indicate on a continuum of 1-8 how stressed they were, with 8 depicting very highly stressed, and 1 very little stress.

The differences in pre- and post-pilot workshop series were calculated. The averages and standard deviations were calculated. The use of both the Sign test and the Wilcoxon Rank test confirm that there is a significant difference between pre- and post-stress levels at the 0,05 level.

8.4.2 Discussion

All participants indicated a change in level of stress as a direct result of the workshop, with participants feeling less stressed after the pilot workshop series (see Table 8 and Figure 5).

The activities in the workshop, structured around the conceptual model for experiential learning, appeared to have been conducive to these changes in stress level.

Table 8: General level of stress before and after pilot workshop

Participant	Before	After	Difference	Sign	Rank A	Rank B
1	6	3	3	+	24	7
2	7	3	4	+	30,5	7
3	4	2	2	+	13,5	1,5
4	3	2	1	+	7	1,5
5	6	6	1	+	24	18
6	6	4	2	+	24	13,5
7	6	4	2	+	24	13,5
8	4	3	1	+	13,5	7
9	6	5	1	+	24	18
10	3	2	1	+	7	1,5
11	6	3	3	+	24	7
12	7	5	2	+	30,5	18
13	7	6	1	+	30,5	24
14	3	2	1	+	7	1,5
15	7	6	1	+	30,5	24
16	6	4	2	+	24	13,5
Average	5,44	3,69				
Std dev.	1,46	1,36				
Variance	2,26	1,96				
Sign sum				16		
0,05 Sign test	16					
Acceptance >	12					
Rank sums					338	176,5
0,05 wilcoxon rank test	202					
Acceptance >	171,51					
n = 16						

The value of using the knowledge of participants and allowing them to construct their own knowledge, appeared to have added to this process, as participants discovered their own stress causes, decided on their own action strategies and used the group for support. See workbook for detailed analysis of all workshop activities.

The factors identified by participants are all integral to the conceptual model and are prominent in the experiential learning process.

The use of an earth-shaped ball that participants worked with in dealing with questions regarding locus of control, appeared to have led to enhanced senses of locus of control, which in turn led to stress alleviation. The relationship between stress and locus of control is well documented (Lefcourt, 1981; Abouserie, 1994, Von Bergen, 1995; Bandura, 1995; Hall & Hall, 1996).

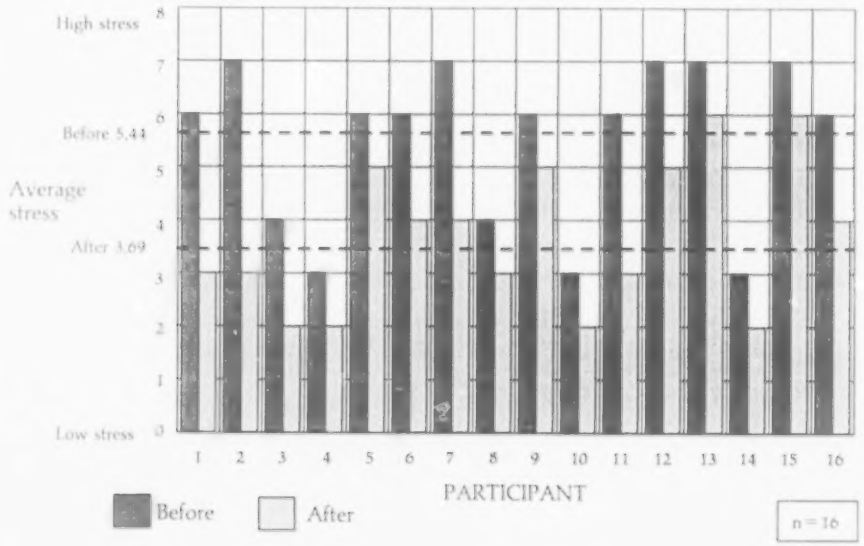
The exercise with the tree metaphor in exploring the antecedents and roots of stress, helped participants to identify their stressors. The creative use of media and the hands-on symbolisation process assisted participants in identification of stressors.

The cohesiveness of the group allowed for the sharing of feelings at a deep level. The opportunity to share problems was perceived in itself as a stress-reducing experience. Some participants found commonalities in their experiences of stress.

The practice of skills in the form of relaxation techniques gave participants specific skills to use outside the safe confines of the workshop venue. The relaxation response has a recuperative effect as it provides a respite from external environmental stress as well as internal stress (Davis *et al.*, 1989:4).

Feeling in touch with the environment was mentioned as a factor responsible for change in level of stress. The healing qualities of nature (Ulrich *et al.*, 1991; Herzog & Bosley, 1992; Kaplan, 1995) were appreciated in the pilot study. Infusion of environmental constructs was well received. Participants expressed views that they felt less alienated from the environment. These comments were interesting, as the workshop was held at UCT and not in a natural setting. However, the infusion of environmental constructs appeared to bring nature to the participants.

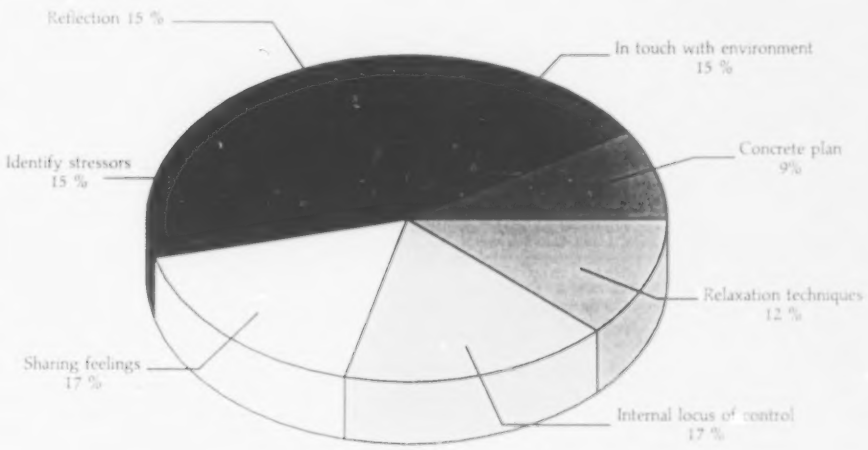
Figure 5: General level of stress before and after workshop



8.4.3 Analysis of components of workshop

An analysis of the components of the workshop indicated that participants were able to discern what helped them most to reduce stress. Sharing feelings, developing an internal locus of control, identifying stressors, reflection opportunities, getting in touch with the environment, relaxation techniques and devising concrete plans to deal with stress were mentioned. Figure 6 depicts the percentages of workshop components responsible for changes in levels of stress as indicated by participants in the pilot study.

Figure 6: Components of workshop responsible for change in levels of stress


Reflection 15 %
In touch with environment 15 %
Identify stressors 15 %
Concrete plan 9%
Relaxation techniques 12 %
Sharing feelings 17 %
Internal locus of control 17 %

8.4.4 Awareness of natural environment

Enhanced senses of the natural environment appear to have resulted from the pilot workshop series. Comments obtained in evaluations, reflection worksheets, post-workshop and follow-up reflections, indicate an increased sense of awareness and appreciation for the environment. In addition, participants depicted an awareness of the possibility of bringing the natural environment into lifeskills interventions, as well as into schools.

Experiential learning research indicates the potency of direct experiences in creating greater understanding and awareness of the environment. The findings of Warren, Sakofs and Hunt (1995) concur with the pilot workshop series findings of increased awareness.

8.4.5 Critique

When viewing the data from the pilot workshop series, the following has to be considered:

- The stress questionnaire was specifically designed for this workshop series and the reliability and validity have not yet been tested. The questionnaire is not standardised.
- The participants may have been predisposed to change their levels of stress. By choosing to attend the workshop series, they may have felt the need to undergo some intervention and change some aspects of the stress in their lives.
- The very occurrence of being away from work or home for two days may have contributed to the lessening of their stress, without the workshop content or methods being responsible.
- The small sample may have skewed the results.
- Long-term follow-up has not yet been done.
- Stress is a very broad and intricate term with manifold ramifications (see workbook for detailed definitions and explanations of stress). This analysis may be superficial and not address all the issues pertinent to stress.

8.5 CONCLUSION

The pilot workshops were repeated with other groups, refined and expanded to form the core of the workbook, which is rooted in research findings. The workbook encompasses the thematic aspirations of giving psychology away (Miller, 1969), emancipatory education and infusion of environmental constructs in lifeskills interventions. Goal-directed design of the workbook includes relevancy, immediate applicability and practicality for facilitators in the community.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

9.1 SYNTHESIS

The investigation of the enhanced relationship between participants in lifeskills courses and the environment has yielded important findings. All the key aims have been attained:

- There are indications of enhanced self-perceptions as a result of the intervention.
- The intervention appears to lead to empowerment and capacity building, concomitant to increased effective participation in communities, organisations and the environment.
- A conceptual model has been proposed for experiential learning.
- A workbook based on the findings of this research project has been produced. Environmental constructs have been infused in the content of the workbook.

9.1.1 Enhanced self-perceptions, empowerment and capacity building

As indicated by the TST results, the intervention has resulted in significant positive differences in systemic senses of self, personal characteristics, external meanings as well as value attributions to the self. Questionnaire and interview results correspond with these findings and give substance to the TST results, which are not without opprobrium.

The relationship between locus of control, self-concept, empowerment and capacity building was illustrated in Chapter 3. The results indicate that the intervention enhanced the attainment of these constructs. Although it is problematic to measure hypothetical constructs, indications are that the intervention led to significant positive changes in participants' self-constructs. Indications of the sustainability of the changes are an additional beneficial factor. The findings have to be seen in the light of the confines and limitations of the research project.

The level of personal exploration and expression attained a depth that allowed for further expansion of self-constructs. The emphasis on process rather than product orientation, non-judgmental style, group safety and cohesion, as well as acceptance of and respect for participants in an atmosphere of affirmation, could have been relevant factors responsible for the significant changes in empowerment as expressed by participants.

9.1.2 Environment

An enhanced relationship between participants in lifeskills courses and the environment is suggested by the results. The implications of this could be far-reaching, and may impact on the way educators approach teaching methodology. This holds special import for environmental educators.

Empowerment acquisition has direct implications for interrelationships with the environment, as participants who feel more in charge of themselves will tend to be more proactively involved in their environments. This is substantiated by the high incidence of participants indicating an increased involvement in their communities as well as the large number of participants who implemented change at work and at home as a result of the intervention.

The juxtaposition of environmental education as a participatory and inclusive process of sharing knowledge and power, to some previous implementations of environmental education as authoritarian transfer of knowledge, while "ignoring the complexity of issues and peoples' existing understandings, values and perceptions; ignoring the need to level power gradients" (Commission on Environmental Education, 1996:36) can be achieved in implementing the conceptual model.

9.1.3 Conceptual model

The conceptual model could be the basis for further courses. The results from the research regarding the intervention indicate that the experiential learning process may be instrumental in bringing about positive self-construct changes.

The aim of experiential learning, which is to enable participants to experience the world as something that can be controlled and shaped (Murgatroyd, 1992) appears to be verified by the results pertaining to locus of control, self-concept and empowerment.

The use of reflection at pertinent moments in the experiential learning process could have contributed to the sustainability of skill acquisition and change. The opportunity to consolidate, internalise and make learning ones' own adds to skill development and extension. The prevalence of long-term and sustained learning as indicated by questionnaire and interview respondents, although requiring further investigation, provisionally supports this notion.

Facilitative and participatory methods, rooted in an ontological perspective of experiential learning and contextualised in group interactive processes, are efficacious in lifeskills courses. The powersharing that facilitation entails, as well as the numerous opportunities for generating own learning and sharing in a group context are integral to self-empowerment. The enhanced senses of self and positive value attributions to self, as well as the expression of the benefits of group sharing, are prime emanations of this process.

The provision of opportunities for continuity and skills practice is an additional factor in sustainability of change and learning. Follow-up procedures and activities as part of the experiential learning process are rudimentary to meaningful skills development.

It was not possible to isolate the exact factor or factors responsible for the changes measured by TST questionnaires and interviews, due to numerous extraneous variables and the complex nature of the intervention, which had multitudinous components and intricate dynamics. However, it appears that the combination of experiential learning and facilitative techniques, content matter and group impact was responsible for the impact of the intervention. Accordingly the entire experiential learning process and concomitant techniques and implementations, and not necessarily any one facet in isolation is seen as contingent to the results.

9.1.4 Workbook

The design of a workbook based on the findings of the present project adds another dimension to research. Having a practical product emanating from research renders research meaningful.

The sequential design of the workbook can further legitimise and validate experiential learning procedures. With a firm grounding in research, the workbook can offer facilitators in the community a sound resource for community development.

9.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this project have ramifications beyond the immediacy of its investigation. With the new education curriculum (Bengu, 1997) emphasising facilitation, active student participation, holistic learning and the infusion of subjects, this research serves as validation of such an approach. A primary recommendation is accordingly that the research projects' methods, conceptual model and results, as well as the workbook, be made available to educators.

The following further recommendations are briefly noted:

- Experiential learning holds potential for being a successful process of educational intervention, based on the tenets as described earlier. Educators should take advantage of the opportunities contained in experiential learning and actively propagate its use.
- Lifeskills courses should focus on opportunities for self-empowerment, capacity building and community involvement.
- Workshops and courses should always include follow-up and continuity. The formation of support groups has to be encouraged.
- Communities have to participate in planning interventions and deciding on topics and must be consulted about course content, venues and needs and share ownership of the process. Potential facilitators in communities must be identified and trained as a matter of urgency.
- Constructs from the natural environment should be infused in lifeskills courses and workshops. Where possible, groups could preferably be run at natural resource centres with access to nature. Lifeskills courses infused with environmental constructs should be made readily available to a broad range of people as soon as possible. Teachers should be trained to infuse environmental

constructs in lessons and include lifeskills education in their curricula. See workbook and pilot study (Chapter 8).

- Environmental educators and other educators must be trained in facilitation skills and the methods of the experiential process.
- Strategic planning of organisations should make provision for environmental education and lifeskills courses to be part of their social responsibility programmes and capacity-building commitments.

9.3 AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

- Continuous action research into and empowerment evaluation of the long-term effects and sustainability of lifeskills courses will add to this research.
- Studies on the quantification and analysis of evaluations and reflections should be investigated.
- The role of reflection as an important construct in experiential learning should be further investigated. The optimal use of reflection in other learning encounters should be explored.
- The relationship between specific skills, such as assertiveness, creativity and communication, should be researched in conjunction with self-concept enhancement and empowerment.
- An analysis of specific case studies of participants in lifeskills courses over an extended period of time could be useful.
- The infusion of environmental constructs and the effect this will have on the environment should be studied.
- Methods to further bridge the gap between the sciences and humanities should be investigated and promoted.
- Further orientation of research towards practical benefit for the community, and research into modes of making research knowledge user friendly, applicable and of value to the community, is necessary.
- The relationship between locus of control and proactive involvement in the environment is an important area for further study.

9.4 CONCLUSION

The research findings of this project are indicative of the advantages of an intervention grounded in experiential learning. Participatory lifeskills interventions are potent mediums for change. The eclectic and holistic predilection of the intervention, as well as content demystification, promotes accessibility and practicality. Paradigms of interventions based on experiential learning as indicated by the conceptual model hold potential for empowerment and capacity building. The framework that is proposed is rooted in a humanistic and a melioristic approach.

Results indicated that participants in lifeskills courses developed enhanced self-perceptions and were more empowered. They showed a tendency to interact

proactively with the environment as a result of attending a lifeskills course. Capacity building has been indicated as a function of the intervention. Further research could add substance to the findings of this research project.

The specifically designed new workshop series' preliminary results are illustrative of a lessening of stress as a result of the workshops. This is promising for locus of control and empowerment enhancement.

The capacity for and practicality of infusing environmental constructs in lifeskills courses, hold implications for all educators. Considering the state of the global environment, there is an urgent need to incorporate environmental education in general lifeskills interventions. The close relationship between self-constructs and environmental interactions further emphasises the urgency of eclectic interventions.

Educators as facilitators have important roles to fulfil in education and capacity building. Input into the training of prospective educators, and a reorientation of existing educators, towards a more participatory and inclusive mode of education, is essential. Educators in South Africa need to become increasingly aware of the potential of experiential learning paradigms. The new dispensation for education (Bengu, 1997) is in essence experiential, facilitative, incorporates group work, is self-esteem focused and integrates knowledge. The pertinence and relevance of the research projects' findings are apparent.

The design of a user-friendly workbook as an end-product of the research process sets a useful trend for future research implementations.

A useful study that contributed to the cross-fertilisation between the natural and social sciences has been completed. This research could hold important implications for enhanced human-environment relationships.

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ISBN 0-7969-1947-X

9 780796 919472

The Lifeskills Project views lifeskills acquisition holistically as a participatory and action-oriented process in the context of the environment. Humans are part of their environment and the environment is inextricably linked to human interaction.

A process of action research, the needs expressed by participants and the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), as well as the link between lifeskills and the environment, contributed to the inception of the project.

The research findings indicate the advantages of intervention grounded in experiential learning. Participatory lifeskills interventions are potent mediums for change. Such interventions based on experiential learning can promote empowerment and capacity building.

The report is one of several emanating from the Human Needs, Resources and the Environment (HNRE) Programme, which was initiated by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. The HSRC co-ordinated and managed the funding of the programme.

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